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Preparatory Documents for the 24th PCF Congress

3 - 7 February 1982

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WEST EUROPE REPORT

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PREPARATORY DOCUMENTS FOR THE 24TH PCF CONGRESS

3-7 FEBRUARY 1982

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CENTRAL COMMITTEE RESOLUTIONS ISSUED

On Internal Dissent

Paris L'HUMANITE in French 19 Sep 81 p 6

[Resolution by PCF Central Committee: "On Respect for Democratic Rules in the Party"]

[Text] In recent months, Henri Fiszbin and those who, with him, have created "Rencontres Communistes" [Communist Contacts] have arrived at the point of organizing a faction within the French Communist Party.

Previously, they had gone successively from expression of political disagreements--and there was nothing dramatic about that--to public expression of these disagreements, then to systematic use of the media to oppose nearly all of the Party's positions.

Now they have set up among themselves an organization distinct from the Party, with a headquarters, a regular staff, a weekly publication, card files of Communists. They are organizing public meetings and are systematically seeking out support both outside and inside the Party.

All this is completely contradictory to the regulatory by-laws on which membership in the French Communist Party is based.

Simple observation of life and common sense indeed show that the elementary rule for the functioning of any organization, of any political party, is respect for the decisions taken on the occasion of congresses and by the elected leadership.

This is an even more obvious need for the Communist Party, whose fight for liberation of the workers and for socialism elicits continuous attack from the reactionary forces.

The basic idea of the Party combines democracy and effectiveness. Democratic centralism makes it possible, in effect, to join together free political discussion, the decisions taken by a majority, and implementation of them by all the Communists. It is a guarantee of fidelity to the commitments made.

"The organization and activity of tendencies and factions are not compatible with the democratic functioning of the Party. They would sap its unity and the effectiveness of its action. They cannot be accepted," the Party's by-laws state.

All experience shows, indeed, that factionism ossifies the disagreements that may arise in life. It transforms political debate into confrontations. It makes possible all kinds of manipulation of the main media of information. It is a caricature of democracy because the mass of the membership is reduced to looking on at "fights among chiefs" as they form and dissolve political alliances.

Anyone who systematically and continually combats the decisions of the congresses and of the elected leadership, who does not respect the most elementary principles of the by-laws, no longer wants to share a life in common.

Therefore it is perfectly clear that the present situation cannot go on any longer.

Either Henri Fiszbin and those around him renounce their undertaking and decide to defend their ideas within the framework of the democratic life of the party, in the democratic discussion of the 24th Congress. There is still time to do so.

Or they go on with their factional activity; and this means that they themselves would choose to put themselves outside the party.

The preparation for the 24th Congress puts this choice--which is up to them--into sharp relief.

After the period that we have recently been living through, and in a new situation, our Party has more need than ever for deep, thorough and independent reflection. In accordance with the democratic rules of the Party, and with boldness, the Central Committee will create the conditions for it.

In the preparation for the Congress, the Party's 28,000 rank-and-file organizations will be called on to examine all the political questions.

They will also be able to contribute to it in the discussion columns of the Party's press, which permit even broader circulation of ideas.

With cell meetings, conferences of sections and federal units, and the Party's congress, this discussion will go on from mid-October to the end of January. No party in this country organizes for nearly 4 months collective reflection that is so democratic.

Refusal to take part in this signifies clearly that the aim of those who are developing factional activity is not democratic debate but rather an attempt to impose the de-facto existence of a wing.

Communists differ from one another, and this is a great strength for the Party. It enriches its debates with all the dimensions of reality.

It may happen that the majority's choice does not convince everyone. Life is like that, especially when the problems are complex.

An unconvinced Communist can maintain his opinion. But common struggle on the basis of the majority choice and the decisions taken makes it possible to remain together, to struggle together, and either to work out the disagreements or to modify, all together, the positions taken.

Thus, diversity does not harden into struggles between clans. Contrary to the caricature sometimes drawn of it, democratic centralism does not imply that the Party is monolithic.

Respect for democratic centralism is a choice of great political and human value.

The Central Committee, elected at the 23rd Congress to implement the policy defined and the by-laws, considers it its duty to ensure respect for the rules for the democratic life of the Party.

Paris, 18 September 1981.

Calling the 24th Congress

Paris L'HUMANITE in French 10 Oct 81 p 4

[Resolution by PCF Central Committee: "All Communists Called to Far-Ranging Discussion"]

[Text] The Central Committee decides on the calling of the 24th Congress of the Party. It will take place at Saint-Ouen from 3 to 7 February 1982.

Agenda:

1. The French Communist Party, the development of its activity and the rise of its influence in the struggle for new social and democratic conquests, peace, for a democratic advance toward socialism.

(Rapporteur: Georges Marchais)

--Adoption of the proposed resolution.

(Rapporteur: Guy Hermier)

2. Election of the leadership organizations.

The Central Committee calls on the Communists to undertake far-ranging discussions in the cell assemblies, the section conferences and the federal conferences on the basis of the proposed resolution that it has just adopted.

In order to make possible an exchange of opinions that is more complete and in accordance with the Party's by-laws, the Central Committee decides to open up the platform for preparatory discussion for the Congress in the Monday 9 November issue of L'HUMANITE.

It calls on the Communists to contribute to this discussion by expressing their thinking, submitting their proposals and, if they deem it necessary, their amendments of the proposed resolution.

This free discussion, reflecting the diversity of the experience and the concerns of the Communists as they manifest their desire to work out their Party's policy themselves with full knowledge and with full responsibility, will enrich the debate preparatory to their Congress.

To provide for responsibility for the appearance of this discussion platform, the Central Committee has elected from its membership a committee composed of the following comrades: Rene Andrieu, Mireille Bertrand, Alain Bocquet, Jean Burles, Collette Coulon, Felix Damette, Maxime Gremetz, Guy Hermier, Philippe Herzog, Therese Hirsberg, Jean-Pierre Kahane, Claude Llabres, Paul Laurent, Jean-Paul Magnon, Henri Malberg, Georges Marchais, Catherine Margate, Joe Metzger, Claude Poperen, Pierre Pranchere, Marcel Rosette, Andre Sainjon, Lucien Seve, Maurice Verdier, Marcel Zaidner.

In accordance with the needs for reflection and the elaboration called for by the combats that we have been waging and the new situation, the committee will work to make sure that the discussion platform gives a true reflection of the exchange of ideas that is taking place within the Party.

On Fiszbin, Rencontres Communists Founders

Paris, L'HUMANITE in French 10 Oct 81 p 4

[Resolution by PCF Central Committee: "A Great Debate within the Normal Framework of the Life of the Party"]

[Text] With regard to the factional activity of Henri Fiszbin and those who, with him, have created "Rencontres Communistes," a text over the signatures of 250 persons has been made public. It was made public even before the Central Committee of the French Communist Party, to whom it was addressed, had knowledge of it, with the concern for propaganda taking precedence over any other consideration.

The signatories ask that the decision recently taken in the name of the Central Committee by the secretariat "not be implemented."

They make no reference to the position taken by the Central Committee on 18 September last regarding the behavior of the 30 founders of "Rencontres Communistes."

In the face of the steady escalation that has led the "Rencontres Communistes" founders to develop factional activity that is in complete contradiction with the rules for the democratic life of the Party, the last appeal by the Central Committee was an additional sign of our desire to continue political debate within the framework of the life of the Party.

After reviewing the facts, what did we say? "The present situation cannot go on any longer. Either Henri Fiszbin and those around him renounce their undertaking and decide to defend their ideas within the framework of the democratic life of the party, in the democratic discussion of the 24th Congress. There is still time to do so. Or they go on with their factional activity; and this means that they themselves would choose to put themselves outside the party."

The response from the initiators of "Rencontres Communistes" was immediate. They rejected the Central Committee's appeal and redoubled their factional activity. By adopting this attitude, they deliberately put themselves outside the Party.

Within the framework of its responsibilities and in conformity with the Central Committee's resolution of 18 September, the secretariat of the Central Committee took note of this fact: the founders of "Rencontres Communistes" are no longer members of the Party.

Paris, 9 October 1981.

The Central Committee of the French Communist Party.

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DRAFT RESOLUTION FOR 24TH PCF CONGRESS

Paris L'HUMANITE in French 13 Oct 81 pp 7-12

[Text] Introduction

The 24th Congress of the PCF will take place under circumstances without precedent in the history of France.

Giscard d'Estaing's defeat, the election of Francois Mitterrand as president of the republic on 10 May 1981 and the Left's victory in the June legislative elections have ended 23 years of Rightist rule. For the first time in one-third of a century, Communist ministers are participating in the government. A new era in the nation's history is beginning.

The PCF played its part in the victory. Determination to bring about change was the central theme underlying the campaign waged by the militants and their candidate, Georges Marchais, in the presidential election. The PCF vote was decisive for the 10 May victory and the subsequent election of a Leftist majority in the National Assembly.

The new situation thus created a rich in potential, but complex and even full of contradictions.

The crisis is deep-rooted. The problems to be resolved are immense. The capitalist forces are determined to fight. Without the continuous and intelligent intervention of the people's forces, there will be no lasting progress. The serious electoral defeat suffered by our party does not put it in the best position to contribute to that progress.

At the same time, the backlash against Giscard's policy and the wish to put an end to the current crisis, the commitments made by the president of the republic, the role our party is playing and the clearheadedness of the millions of workers who believe in it are genuine assets as we forge ahead.

Under these conditions, the PCF, in accordance with the course set by its 22nd and 23rd Congresses, made an unequivocal choice: To participate as fully in the new majority as it did in the electoral victory, to make use of every opportunity to bring about the social, economic and political changes necessary to begin the country's recovery from the current crisis and give it new impetus.

Taking the measure of its increased responsibilities, the PCF is resolutely looking ahead to a resurgence of its influence. In the 24th Congress it is determined to understand the reasons for its setback the better to begin moving forward again, to understand the scope and all the implications of the important strategic choices of the last two congresses, and to reflect more deeply on the kind of practical political action needed to carry them out.

It is doing so in full awareness of the fact that it is working on behalf of the country itself, convinced that the popular forces need a large Communist Party in order to bring durable change to their lives--in other words, to advance democratically toward socialism.

I. THE LESSONS OF RECENT DECADES

The fact that the victory of the Left should coincide with a major electoral setback for our party poses a serious political question not only for communists but for the mass movement as a whole.

As our preliminary analysis has shown, to make sense of such a paradox one must surely take a critical look at the battle we fought in the presidential election, and in a more general way on the way in which the party has carried on its struggle since the 23rd Congress.

But a lucid understanding requires getting back to basics, looking at the overall thrust of our history in recent decades, the changes in circumstance which created unprecedented problems for us to face and the way we responded to them, if we are to learn the important lessons it can teach.

1. A New Historical Era

The most basic fact is that, while we honorably and effectively coped with the difficult demands life made on us, it took us time, too much time, to make the transition from the strategic concepts which proved valid at the time of the Popular Front, the Resistance, the Liberation, to the different concepts needed to cope with the profound transformation of the national and international realities of revolutionary struggle.

A Changing France

France, in fact, has been changing since the mid-1950's.

France's political transformation began first of all with the establishment of the Fifth Republic in 1958. Confronted with acute domestic and external problems, France's upper middle class no longer found the system of institutions of the Fourth Republic a suitable instrument of control in terms of meeting their needs. It took advantage of the political crisis born of the Algerian War to destroy it.

The 1958 Constitution reduced the power of the assemblies and created an all-powerful executive branch; in other words it replaced a parliamentary system with a presidential system. In 1962, the decision to elect the president of the republic by universal suffrage--cutting out all but the two front-running candidates in the second round--only accentuated the personalization of power. It was a powerful factor in polarizing French political life, an attempt intended ultimately to implant the Anglo-Saxon practice of alternation without endangering capital, by marginalizing the revolutionary political forces. We underestimated the serious threat this new institutional mechanism posed to our party.

Through this far-reaching political mutation, the upper middle-class had created the instrument it needed in order to better protect both its dominance and its profits.

The rapid growth of the state's monopolistic capitalism after 1958 was accompanied by a veritable upheaval in French society. Material production almost quadrupled in one generation and, by modernizing, by becoming more centralized, a great deal of socialization came about. The disintegration of the traditional forms of the small tradespeople both in the cities and in the countryside went hand in hand with an enormous increase in the number of wage-earners, a class which today includes four-fifths of the occupationally active sector of the population. Thus millions of men, women and young people began in various degrees to share the laborer's experience of capitalist exploitation, labor's demands, and trade union activity.

This development was intimately linked to others: The rural exodus and frantic urbanization at the expense of the workers, the lengthening of the educational process and its new segregating role, the rapid growth of worker categories such as OS [Specialized Worker] and technicians, the influx of immigrant workers, the massive influx of women into the job market. The scope and rapidity of these changes, their successive effects on the nation as a whole, created divisions in the social fabric and breaks with past behavior and attitudes. Sharply conflicting with the law of profit and intermonopolistic competition were the growing opportunities for economic efficiency, social advancement and personal growth, which were reflected in new aspirations for a better quality of work and life, for justice, dignity and solidarity.

Faced with mounting discontent and strife, big capital developed a more authoritarian approach to its state intervention, while the demand for participation, responsibility and real democracy grew more intense.

Hit hard by the loss of its colonial empire, constrained to redeploy its forces in the search for new spheres of influence and profit within the framework of the imperialist division of the world into separate spheres, once De Gaulle had departed it pressed for European and Atlantic integration. But this destructive redeployment only highlighted the already crying contradiction between the interests of the nation and those of the multinationals, and, more recently, the contradictions between the latter and ideas of democratic nationalization and cooperation in the mutual interest of different peoples.

Thus, by setting out to remodel France in accordance with its class interests, the upper middle-class destabilized the whole society. It raised to a new level the radical contradiction between the new productive forces and the old social relationships. And it widened the circle of forces capable of freeing themselves.

This is the origin of the general crisis into which we plunged in the early 1960's: Capitalism in our country reached its historical high-water mark. It increasingly lost control of the profound social changes that came as a result of scientific and technological challenges, needs for social justice and human emancipation, and aspirations for progress and peace in the world. Today the omnipotence of the law of profit has left in its wake the combined effects of chaos, the sacrifice of human labor, the squandering of industrial, agricultural and intellectual potential, the degradation of the environment, increased authoritarianism, the demoralization of the people, the strangling of the regions, national humiliation. Its continuation and the harmonious growth of the country proved incompatible.

All the changes in recent decades can be summed up in this one essential fact: Capitalism has had its day, the hour of socialism has come.

The Fifth Republic was exactly 10 years of age when the events of May-June 1968 abruptly laid bare what was beginning to ripen in the depths of French society. The first major confrontation between the mass of workers and the monopolist regime, it showed--not without confusion--the nascent power of the mass movement which aspired to the liberation of social relationships and personal life, and pressed for a reunion of intellectual and manual labor, and for self-management, challenging the entire established order. It was already possible to see that socialism was the only answer to the nation's problems, a socialism that will have to be in tune with our times, and will be uniquely French.

Thus, the country's entry into a new historical period posed radically new problems which our party had to face, problems which required it to offer our people political programs that took these changes and those aspirations into account.

A Changing World

Our need for new strategic thinking was all the greater because change was going on outside France as well. The changes in France took place in the context of the changes that affected the world starting in the late 1950's.

The decline of the Cold War and the beginnings of peaceful coexistence which stamped those years were evidence of the turning point that had been reached in terms of the international balance of class forces. Expansion and growing weight of socialism, collapse of the colonial system, struggles for a better life and democracy in the capitalist countries, the take-off of liberation movements such as the women's liberation movement and the demand of young people for a better life--these were all dimensions of the changes under way.

For the first time in this century, a world war was not the midwife of major transformations. The change in the balance of forces prevented imperialism from resorting to a general conflict to remedy its contradictions and weakness. It made it possible for action by the masses to play a role in safeguarding peace. Its confirmation by constant tension and even partial retreats opened up new vistas of revolutionary struggle.

While previously it had taken war--international or civil--to bring every socialist country into being, a peaceful transition to socialism now appeared as a real possibility in some countries. This was true for France.

These changes made an original approach to ways and means of achieving socialist revolution more necessary than ever before.

The 20th Congress of the CPSU [Communist Party of the Soviet Union] And The Diverse National Paths to Socialism

In 1956 the 20th Congress of the CPSU raised the question again.

The condemnation of Stalin's "cult of personality", by revealing the mistakes and crimes committed in his time, came as such an immense shock to both communists and

the public that if forced our party to undertake a critical reexamination of our activities as well as the realities of life in the socialist countries. Even more to the point, by concluding that the international situation was favorable to peaceful coexistence and reasserting in that context Lenin's idea that all peoples will come to socialism, but each in its own particular form, fresh thinking was generated throughout the communist movement on the diversity of national paths to socialism.

This was not a question our party had previously ignored. Maurice Thorez, for example, in a 1946 interview with the TIMES advanced the idea that the French people could envision other roads than that followed by the Russian Communists in the march to socialism. But that statement remained nothing more than a theoretical possibility. The Cold War, the situation at the time in the international communist movement, and our own theoretical and political thinking of the time prevented it from going any further.

The 20th Congress of the CPSU, coming at a time when profound change was under way, contributed to giving a sense of urgency to deeper thinking about national paths to socialism. Over the following months and years, the persistence within socialist countries of flaws which it began to critically analyze, their problems of development, the growing diversity of solutions and experiments--at a time when the problem of France's political future was being posed--confirmed the fact that it was of capital importance to approach this all-important question in a new way. It was necessary to rid ourselves of the dogmatic concept of a model of socialism that was built elsewhere, the idea that all we had to do was transpose it [to our own country], and move on to define concretely the specific paths to a socialism unique in itself in a country such as ours and in the conditions of our day and age.

Unprecedented Strategic Stakes

Thus our party has seen itself confronted with a strategic question in a situation with unprecedented stakes.

Every communist should clearly understand: For the first time in France, socialism is a real issue, not in a distant and abstract way, but as the concrete response called for by the pressing problems our society faces.

It is a truly unprecedented issue, for it is a question of a peaceful transition to socialism in one of the most highly developed of the capitalist countries, a country with national characteristics quite different from countries which in the past had moved to socialism, and under completely different international conditions.

Resolving that problem was of even greater urgency--we can see this better today--because the political system established in 1958 and the election of the president of the republic by universal suffrage profoundly changed the nature of power at the highest level in our country. In order to maintain--and even more so in order to enhance--its role on the national scene, in order to have credibility as a party sponsoring a candidate for the highest office in the land, our party was obliged to provide a total political program that was completely credible and well-adapted to French realities, so it could attract a variety of voter blocs and lead the struggles for the revolutionary transformation of society.

This--the ability to design a French path toward a French socialism--was to prove decisive for our party in the last several decades.

2. The Party's Responses

What were the party's responses, throughout the whole of this essential period, to this question which had such broad ramifications?

A Combative and Constructive Role

Just at the time when it was beginning to become a heated question, the party had to deal with some dramatic political situations: The war in Algeria, the power play of 13 May 1958 and the establishment of a personalist regime. It defended the interests of French workers, struggled to safeguard democratic freedoms and assumed its international responsibilities toward peoples struggling for their independence--waging particularly intense battles in the service of just causes.

In 1958 it was the only party to oppose the establishment of the new government, and this opposition cost it a large number of votes. Without letting itself be overwhelmed by these problems, it launched right into the task of bringing together the forces needed for the mass movement to take the offensive, retake its positions and secure democratic change. It was on the basis of that fundamental approach that it set itself the goal of a union of the Left on a common governmental program. Sparing no effort, it worked until its efforts were finally rewarded by the conclusion of such an accord in 1972. Then it worked unceasingly for the success of the Common Program.

Along with that intense political activity, it was engaged in an effort to analyze and to come up with new theoretical formulations, as it was anxious to remove all obstacles to the path of change. In 1963, in the Ivry central committee, Maurice Thorez unequivocally rejected the idea that a single party is essential for the transition to and building of socialism. At the 17th Congress, Waldeck Rochet reinforced the deep bonds that link struggle for democracy with struggle for socialism. In 1966, the Argenteuil central committee came up with a novel and important approach to ideological and cultural issues. At the same time, the "days of study" held at Choisy on monopoly state capitalism broke new ground in the Marxist analysis of the evolution of capitalism and French society.

Following the events of May-June 1968, that strategic advance was highlighted in the Champigny "Manifesto" (December 1968) and subsequently--after an initial diagnosis of the 1971 crisis--was embodied in Georges Marchais's "Democratic Challenge" (1973). But it was not until 1976, the 22nd Congress--enriched and made even more penetrating by the work of the 23rd Congress--that the overall outlines of a distinctively French socialism, and the democratic path that corresponds to it--took shape.

Throughout that period, our party thus made both a combative and a constructive contribution to the struggles for social progress and freedom, to the cause of national independence and internationalism. It encouraged the growth of new ideas and above everything else the idea of change. When we say that it played its part in the Leftist victory of May-June 1981, we do not mean just the 8 months of the campaign to beat Giscard d'Estaing in the elections, but more than 20 years of efforts to bring about new policies. It is on that basis that we justify our assertion.

Running Behind The Times

However, when one looks back on this last quarter of a century, one must agree that our party certainly delayed too long in beginning its exploration of paths leading to a socialism that conform to the France of today. Nineteen fifty-six, 1976: It took us 20 years to come up with a complete and adequate response to that critical question, and the lack of one hurt us after 1958, especially in 1968.

Of course, the "delay of 1956" noted by the 23rd Congress does not mean that we were outside the mainstream of events. Those years were not wasted, but what we should focus on today is the idea that they did weigh on the future. We passed through the changes of the 1960's and 1970's with a real desire to understand them but without ever really succeeding in getting a solid grip on them. Our advances, even the most remarkable ones, were lone bound to an out-of-date world view, and remained partially inoperative because they were not integrated into the kind of coherent strategy that would unleash their full potential.

Certainly, the task was enormous, and we had to face very single problem. All the same, at the time when new forces were beginning confusedly to turn toward the option of an alternative society, we were not able to say quickly enough or clearly enough: "Socialism is what France must have, and here is the distinctive socialism we are proposing." Such is the basis of the strategic delay in historical development.

Everything we did was affected, particularly our policy of union. The fact that the stakes of class conflict were undergoing profound change called for a corresponding modification--not of the permanent and imperativ necessity of union--but rather of the content it had to have, the form in which it should be achieved.

To start with, following the events of 1958, our party revived the traditional model of union, of which the most prestigious example was the Popular Front. Its goal was to reach a basic and comprehensive political accord with the Socialist Party [PS].

But this was to ignore the differences between the two eras. The changes in the world, the changes in French society, and then the worsening of its crisis called for fundamental change. Indeed, it was because we perceived this that we did everything we could to give that accord a really transformative content, and we succeeded in doing so.

But as soon as the Common Program was agreed upon, in 1972, on that basis, the illusion took hold that the critical question of the substance of the changes needed was pre-arranged, that the task of mobilizing the people's forces to support far-reaching solutions had already been worked out, that the PS already established such objectives as its own.

Despite all our efforts, that was a hindrance in our struggle to make the masses fully aware of the nature and depth of the transformations needed, aware of the scope of the struggle needed to impose them. And this made us underestimate the fundamental importance of the workers' involvement, an importance that was all the greater because the march toward socialism assumes their participation at all levels of responsibility. In sum, the urgent quest for and subsequent conclusion of an accord at the summit that left the real condition of the people's movement behind fed illusions that paralyzed its initiative.

At the same time, precisely because the Common Program did have the elements of change, it blurred the differences between the two parties, it sowed illusions about the PS. In an environment in which everything encouraged the polarization of political life to our disadvantage, that polarization boosted the socialist vote, which was seen as the "useful" vote, even by communist voters. And that also had an effect on the workers in the new wage-earning classes who had been attracted to the Left by the Common Program, but who were hard to win to our ideas because of our delay in defining the road to democratic, self-managing socialism.

This impression was further reinforced by the fact that, confronted with the difficult problem posed by the mechanics of the presidential election, we twice avoided the problem by abstaining from fielding a presidential candidate: In 1965, to sustain the accord with the PS, then--after it rejected our 1969 proposal for a joint candidacy--in 1974, because of the accord. So we ourselves lent credence to the idea that our party should abdicate its own position in order to make victory possible, the idea that the road to change required it to step back so the PS could have the dominant position.

Without a doubt, the Common Program did have some positive features. It testifies to our continuous efforts on behalf of union. It popularized the great objectives of social transformation and made the PS take them into account, especially in the context of its strategy. Today those remain important milestones in our struggle. But given the nature of the problem, it also had negative effects, as the 23rd Congress showed. It crystalized the aspiration for change, but at the same time impeded broader awareness of the substance and conditions of change. Because of it the Left was able to move forward, but at our expense.

The other political forces thoroughly exploited the situation. Aware of what was at stake, the upper middle-class was determined to weaken us by any means possible, and it treated the PS with kid gloves, in order to build a larger consensus around its policy. As for the PS, forced to face the lessons shown by its foundering at the end of the 1960's, it ended by accepting our proposed Common Program with the proclaimed objective of using the millions of PCF votes to create a balance of forces that favored its own plans.

All this, in the last analysis, is what makes it possible to understand the complex history of our voting strength: A significant comeback after 1958, continual erosion starting in 1973, and, in what was our most difficult election, a serious reverse in 1981.

Thus, despite the correctness of our concerns and the vigor of our efforts, despite our awareness since 1972 of the problems incurred in reaching agreement on a Common Program and our attempts to resolve them starting in 1974, the form of union into which we were locked and the resulting restrictions on our freedom of action engendered insurmountable problems.

From 1977 to 1981

The weak reaction of the masses to the PS's repudiation of the Common Program, the problem many workers had in trying to make sense of that decision, showed clearly the extent of the illusions created by that form of union, the failure of the masses to take change into their own hands.

A 5-year agreement made in 1972 lasting the lifetime of one legislature, the Common Program was to have been updated in 1977. We went into the negotiations solely in the desire to keep it on the same course and preserve its basic provisions, without radicalizing it further, and in order to make the March 1978 elections a victory for the Left. But the PS approached them from a completely different angle. Our electoral decline had not yet assumed its full dimensions. The problems that appeared in 1977 came from this: The intention of the PS--as expressed, for example, in the Congress of Nantes--to use the weakening of our party to obtain a balance of forces much more favorable for the Socialists while keeping a free hand, and to do this either by leading us to capitulation or by effecting a break and jettisoning the Common Program.

We were right not to capitulate. To allow the Common Program to be emptied of its most transformative features would have meant we ourselves were endorsing the idea that the crisis could be ended and the problems resolved to the benefit of the workers without carrying out the essential economic and political reforms, which is the very illusion that has to be dispelled for progress to take place. Far from preserving the party's influence, that would have tended to compromise its essential character. All of the preceding goes to show that such a step would undoubtedly have further aggravated the serious problems we confronted, destroyed the fruits of our initial efforts to deal with them. We had no other responsible choice than to fight to try to overcome this obstacle.

This is what we resolved to do, and under the most difficult conditions, at a time when intolerance of change and the persistence of illusions made it possible to treat the fundamental questions we raised about the real orientation of the PS and the imperative prerequisites for ending the crisis as trifling but ill-omened polemics.

The efforts we pursued to implement our strategy had far-reaching effects, which cannot be measured by the election results alone. Without our determined battle against the ideas that the workers would inevitably have to make sacrifices, and that a monopolistic redeployment was needed, against the Giscardian consensus and social-democratic solutions to the crisis; without our campaign for a clear and solid union based on the indispensable democratic transformation; without our proposals on basic questions such as social inequalities, temporary labor, the role of science and technology, the necessity of French production, diversification of energy development, including nuclear energy, the nationalizations, regionalization, and others still; without the concrete struggles we led to arrest the national decline and to involve the masses in protest against the tragic effects of the crisis, who can believe the situation today would be one in which there could be a real possibility of progress?

But confronted with the most difficult election our party had ever faced, one in which we were still suffering from the negative consequences of the immediately preceding period, we were not successful in making ourselves understood by a wide enough circle of the workers. In an atmosphere of ruthless ideological warfare, some of our initiatives even gave rise to the media's falsification of our positions and real objectives. We saw this, for example, in the fight we had to wage to clarify the PS' position and explain the nature of the union, the necessity of which we have consistently preached; we saw this in regard to the rightfully high priority we gave to the effort to improve the lot of the most disadvantaged workers.

It is also true of our intervention on behalf of immigrant workers and our fight against the ravages of drug abuse, even though admittedly the latter effort was not without its mistakes, for instance a certain tendency to try to cure the problem rather than the afflicted; but in fact it did courageously address problems which everyone today recognizes are very real. But those mistakes, and the role they played in the election results, can only be understood within the context of the overriding fact: The impossibility of orchestrating implementation of the whole new strategy promulgated by the 22nd and 23rd Congresses in a short lapse of time and under the pressure of events, when that strategy ran counter to long-held and deep-rooted attitudes which were further reinforced by the logic of the Common Program.

In the last analysis it was the delay in elaborating our strategy that was responsible. This must be the starting point if we are to better understand our serious electoral setback.

Fully Implement the Line of the 22nd and 23rd Congresses

Such are the lessons that we draw from that critical period.

We do so without evasions, as is fitting for a responsible party which we are, and we do so determined to analyze as lucidly as possible the basic causes and to meet the new problems we face with the new responses now demanded. This is our way of remaining loyal to our party's exceptional heritage.

For without it, without its fidelity to the revolutionary path chosen by the Congress of Tours, without all that the struggles, the sacrifices and the efforts of several generations of communists have made of it, the democratic path to socialism would be inconceivable for our country. The historic justification of the existence of the working class's revolutionary party, far from declining, is greater than ever. To those who affect to demand what purpose the PCF serves, we can respond with perfect assurance: In this great capitalist country, France, it serves to open up concrete prospects for the advance toward socialism.

The primary lesson of these last 25 years is the absolute necessity for our party to nourish the people's hopes on the only prospect that is not an illusion: French-style socialism.

The 22nd and 23rd Congresses laid the foundations for such a strategy.

The 22nd Congress, by discarding the concept of a dictatorship of the proletariat for France, liberated our strategy from the idea of a single model of socialism. Then, too, the ideas that had accumulated during the preceding period bore their fruit. The indissoluble bonds between socialism and democracy were able to show their fecundity in terms of the national realities and the opportunities which opened up by changes and progress in the modern world. This is what gave, and will continue to give, such historic significance to the 22nd Congress.

The 23rd Congress went still more deeply into this and enriched it further. Assimilating the important lessons to be learned from the failure of the Common Program, it freed our political action from bondage to the form of union that came out of the experience with the Popular Front and the Liberation, which itself tended to become a model. It reconciled our concept of socialism with the road that could lead to it. The strategic innovation of the 22nd Congress, linking socialism and democracy intimately together, was to lead to the revolutionary idea of a democratic advance toward socialism, and to the path of self-management.

Critical reflection on the historic period just ended and more recent developments in no way discredits that cohesive package of theoretical and political innovations. Quite to the contrary, what hurt our party was the long time it took to define the and the problems in implementing them.

What is important now, in the situation which has developed is to follow the path to its logical conclusions. This is the meaning of the 24th Congress.

II. SOCIALISM FOR FRANCE

In 1981 a majority of the French people voted for change. The task now on the agenda is to really satisfy that aspiration, in other words to begin resolving the problems of every kind which assail the workers of the country.

The prospect of democratic and self-managing socialism that was introduced to our people by the 22nd and 23rd Congress is the definitive in-depth response to that challenge. For this is not a crisis of temporary problems, exogenous causes, or political blunders. It is a crisis of the capitalistic system itself. Thus resolution of the crisis necessarily means moving society toward socialism. There is no other way.

So nothing is more important for communists than taking a new look at that program, to master its substance, to follow out all the practical consequences, to make it clear and share it with the workers. It is a question of mobilizing the full potential of our party in assuming our role in the period now beginning.

A. Our Choice For France

The 22nd and 23rd Congresses made the goal of our present actions the advance toward a socialism which itself is democratic. Today we reaffirm that historic decision.

1. Our Aim: Democratic, Self-Managing Socialism

To meet the needs being expressed by French men and women, we must move gradually toward a new type of society and life for man, a new type of development and democracy for the nation, a new role for France in the world.

A New Type of Society and Life for Man

The policy big capital pursued for decades, and accentuated further by the Giscardian regime, sacrificed the country's most precious treasure--its men and women, its youth--to the imperatives of capitalistic profit. This is the source of all the suffering, of all the injustice, of all the injury to which our people have been subjected.

What we say is that we must reverse that intolerable and disastrous orientation. Production should serve man, not vice versa. This is the first of the fundamental changes to be made.

Eliminating unemployment, changing the nature of work, moving toward a full-employment society--this is from any point of view a central objective. And it is a realistic one: Satisfying the needs of the people, enhancing the nation's potential, increasing cooperation with other peoples, all that requires the creation of a great number of additional jobs. At the same time it is important to make full use of

science and technology, to increase productivity on a number of different fronts. This assumes an effort to economize on materials. It also assumes substantially raising level of the workers' skills, a change in the status of OS's, elimination of temporary and dangerous labor, renovation of the content of work and training, a significant reduction in the length of the work-week, lowering retirement age, increasing free time, increasing the opportunities for access to knowledge and culture, better leisure opportunities and forging new social relations.

Full employment is inseparable from growth of mass consumption. Low wages must be substantially increased, the value of productive employment and skilled labor must be reasserted, social services must be increased and extended, social security must be democratized, and turned into a modern instrument of progress and solidarity, the public services and social agencies must be modernized and improved. Some important tasks can be delayed no longer: Free medical care and the modernization and humanization of the hospitals; making education relevant to life, turning it into a concern of the whole community, restoring secularism, declaring war on segregation and the drop-out phenomenon; repopulating the countryside and making the cities accessible to the masses; providing comfortable housing that workers can afford; promoting mass transportation; making a reality of the modern rights to continuing education, sports, leisure and culture.

Reducing inequalities and building a more just society is an ethical imperative. It is also a growth imperative. The poverty of a significant portion of the population, by limiting the domestic market, deprives economic activity of an essential outlet, while a privileged class squanders an enormous portion of the nation's wealth. It is therefore necessary to reduce inequalities of income and wealth, to reduce the wage spread by raising the purchasing power of those at the bottom, to carry out major reforms to make the tax system more just, to take on the profiteers and to oppose parasitical activities. We must put an end to discrimination in access to employment and advancement in both the public and private sectors.

A better life requires a freer society. This is the opposite of an amoral society. The crisis in morality and traditional customs has served to deepen the aspirations for liberated social relations and more real values. Attacking the roots of the crisis and its effects is the number one requisite for enabling that aspiration to prevail and thereby contribute to renewal. It is in this spirit that we call for combatting the deterioration of social life, demoralization, drug abuse, violence, for taking action together with the workers and their families to resolve serious problems such as insecurity, social segregation in housing, respect for the rights and dignity of immigrant workers.

We want a society that attends to the needs of young people, which really offers them the right to education, training in specialized skills and employment, offers them broader and more varied access to culture, sports, leisure, helps them give meaning to their lives and take their destiny in their own hands. We want a society where the children have broad opportunities for personal growth. We are contributing to the progressive movement leading to women's liberation, we are struggling alongside them to end discrimination, to give women a new place in the world of work, in the family, in society, and to take the offensive against reactionary attitudes and behavior. We are challenging the ubiquitous dominance of relationships based on money and are working to develop social relations in which individuals and groups are bound by new forms of solidarity.

In short, it is a question of advancing toward a new civilization in which humanism is no longer an empty phrase but becomes a living reality.

A New Type of Development and Democracy for the Nation

Our people are exceptionally well prepared to move forward along this path, but they must surmount considerable obstacles.

France has both natural and human resources, economic, scientific and cultural potential, international influence such as few countries possess. But the policy of the upper middle class has allowed these assets to deteriorate, and in many cases these advantages have been partially lost. Advances in science and technology are making possible very great progress in productivity and an unprecedented flowering of the human being, but this requires profound economic and social transformations and authentic cultural revolution. The balance of forces in the world, which favors the forces of peace and liberation, is making it possible for the development of France to benefit its people, but big capital is strongly resisting that orientation both within the country and from the outside.

Mobilizing these assets and surmounting these obstacles requires making some fundamental decisions about means.

We believe France needs a new type of growth, and therefore a modification of its economic structures and political institutions.

Full employment of the productive forces and the continued resurgence of consumption and the service sector will make possible a lasting revival of national production. This new growth will be aimed at reconquering the domestic market and at increasing our foreign trade by restoring balance and diversifying. First of all, it will make use of and valorize our natural resources, our human potential, our intellectual patrimony, our capacity for innovation. It will try to find the natural balances. Top priority must be given to investing in France, and the criteria of profitability and social utility must be changed. Every branch, every region, must be improved and modernized; agriculture must be expanded; new activities, new products must be created; we must move toward the country's energy independence by putting all forms of energy to use in a balanced fashion; we must give new impetus to the universities, to scientific research, to cultural life.

This renewed growth assumes an effective fight against inflation. It is therefore indispensable to attack the miserable legacy of capitalism, to establish fair pricing, to administer public funds and appropriations democratically. We must establish a tax on corporate capital that will encourage job creation and harshly punish waste.

The radical nature of the changes necessary to resolve the crisis calls for the broadest possible involvement of the workers. Democracy is therefore at the heart of change. It is both the goal of the march to socialism and also the means of getting there. Progress in that direction requires an unprecedented flowering of freedom and opportunities for choice in every domain. If the workers are to take their rightful place in social and public life, big capital must be forced to give ground--must be broken, in fact, and radical anticapitalist reforms must be carried out so as to establish other economic structures.

That means first of all democratizing the public sector and the recently nationalized enterprises, creating opportunities in that domain for worker involvement at every level. That also means breaking the money power through democratization of credit, and reform of finance and distribution. Additional nationalizations will be necessary. All the same, the private sector, particularly small and medium-sized enterprises, will play an important role, which implies underwriting their activities but doing away with abusive privileges and monarchical management. The new rights and freedoms of the workers to manage themselves should be recognized, so they can express themselves, organize themselves, change the conditions and organization of work, and take part in decision-making, particularly by creating workshop councils and service councils. The economic rights of the joint production committees in the field of jobs, investment and finance should be extended.

We must also democratize political life, rebuild public institutions on a self-management basis. That requires getting the state out of the hands of the money power, giving the workers access to all management levels, instituting proportional representation in all elections, respecting and broadening the prerogatives of Parliament, diversifying the news media and making it more honest. The workers must be involved in formulating and implementing economic and social policy within the context of decentralized and agreed upon planning. Decentralization of the state is an essential reform, which should make it possible to resolve the problems with those affected, as nearly as possible in accordance with the realities, the needs, and the elements involved in a solution. We must achieve communal self-management, renovate the department, establish regional government, authentic regional identity, eliminate the useless paternalism of the state, do away with authoritarianism and bureaucracy. It is necessary to recognize the right of the peoples in the departments and territories overseas to self-determination, to satisfy their pressing aspirations for development and democracy.

In sum, we must move further toward democracy than ever before, and create new forms of self-managing democracy.

A New Role for France in the World

France's foreign policy has been as negative as its domestic policy, because this was the class position of the upper middle class. Its radical modification is an imperative prerequisite for the march to socialism, for if the nation is to develop along new lines it must have a new orientation in its international relations. Our country cannot advance without contributing to the advance of all others.

France has the duty of insuring its independence, its sovereignty, its security. That assumes that whatever the circumstances our country will make its own decisions, maintain the means to take independent action and have at its disposal an independent national defense capability that rests on maintaining the nuclear deterrent force, on a national, democratic conscripted army. At the same time, it must search for diversified and balanced cooperation with all peoples.

France should try to generate momentum for initiatives for peace and disarmament with security for all, peaceful coexistence, noninterference in the internal affairs of countries and the simultaneous dissolution of the blocs. While respecting its alliances, it could thus practice an active policy of nonalignment.

France has a positive role to play in Europe. It needs to help orient it more toward social progress, democracy, an attitude of openness to the world, cooperation with the developing countries, actions to bring peace closer. In the Common Market context, it can encourage cooperation in every field based on mutual interests and respect of sovereignty.

At the same time, France should play an appropriately important role in the struggle against the scourges of the past which still remain the lot of more than one billion of the earth's people: Famine, servitude, underdevelopment, illiteracy. It must pay special attention to improving its relations with the developing countries, struggling against neocolonial pillaging and all forms of imperialist domination, make proposals and seize every opportunity to advance along the road to a new world economic and political order. It is necessary to maintain an active solidarity with the people struggling for their freedom and their rights.

In short, it is a question of practicing a great, innovative and generous foreign policy. By changing the direction of its own development, France can contribute to changing the direction of development around the world.

The sum of these political decisions constitutes the overall program of our party. The strategy of struggle defended by Georges Marchais in the presidential election campaign has provided a precise and coherent approach. If the proposals it contains appeared too audacious to many Frenchmen, they are all the same necessary if we are to resolve the crisis.

The transformations to be carried out are in no way an abstract program. Their formulation is not rigid, it can be enriched by experience. They do not look forward, really, to a time far in the future or even to intermediate stages. Their necessity is a result of the current realities of the crisis. Their possibility depends on the advancement of the mass movement.

At the same time, these changes are fundamental. Each of them is inevitably the object of class struggle in which the interests of big capital and the working class are in irreconcilable confrontation. This is why they constitute a call to struggle and to unity in the name of democratic, self-managing socialism.

2. The Road of Democratic Progress

The road that leads to such a society is necessarily itself a democratic, self-managing one. Our position is clear: France's march to socialism will at every moment be an advance toward democracy.

Our last two congresses spelled out the positive aspects of this democratic road. It is also and inevitably the same road as that of mass mobilization and union, the road of struggle and an autonomous role for our party.

The Road to a Mass Majority Coalition

It is up to our people to decide on the transformations they want, their scope and the pace of change. So no democratic progress is possible without the creation and development of a mass coalition of the majority, expressed through the unappealable verdict of universal suffrage.

That coalition cannot confine itself to supporting the necessary changes. It must be the agent of change. As soon as it is a question of transformation of society in an ever more democratic direction, the involvement of the workers in taking matters into their own hands and the sharpening of their revolutionary awareness are imperative conditions for success. This is the conclusion we have reached from the experiment of the Common Program. Democratic and self-managing socialism cannot be bestowed or programed from on high. It demands the effort to build--through struggle--the conditions for the march to socialism, a march which must proceed at a pace determined by the needs of the masses, their level of awareness, and the evolution of the balance of forces.

Struggle, in every domain, to make practical progress and enhance awareness; a unity that is solid because it is built among all those affected around objectives they have set themselves; a unity that at the proper time is translated into accords between political formations committed to the same objectives: These are dimensions that are inseparable from the democratic advance, and they are positions to which we are irrevocably committed.

Our last congress was persistently represented as the abandonment of our policy of union. The truth is exactly the opposite, and our participation in the new majority is a stinging rebuttal to those who denied it. It was precisely to transcend the obstacles on which the union had foundered and to start over a clear and lasting foundation that, drawing lessons from experience, we defined a new concept of union.

The PCF and the PS are two different parties. They intend to remain so.

Union with the PS as it is today, radically different from our own in its history, its social composition, its ideology, its organization, its international ties, its strategy, thus poses a complex problem to the revolutionary party which we are.

The 23rd Congress brought to light the conditions needed to resolve this problem: The development through struggle of a mass coalition at a high level, with autonomy of action for each party and their cooperation on the basis of accords which correspond to the real condition of the movement rather than getting ahead of it, in no way masks what differentiates the partners behind what unites them, and it supports action rather than impeding it.

We are convinced: This is the concept and the modality of union which will make it possible to go the distance we require, all the way to socialism, which we are dedicated to building in France in cooperation with other parties who have the same goal, within the context of political pluralism.

The Path of Struggle

Advancement along this road requires both struggle and our party's independent action.

There can be no advance toward socialism without the Communist Party--both as a governing party and a party of revolutionary struggle--continuing to play its irreplaceable role. As the party of the working class, it is the political organization the workers need to defend their interests and fulfill their aspirations. As a revolutionary party, it sets out, in every circumstance, the exigencies of class struggle and its overall contours. As a party of struggle, it gets involved in every domain to change things and clarify ideas. As a governing party, it makes

a unique and responsible contribution to the design and implementation of new policy. Strengthening its capacity to initiate, its organization and its influence is a constant necessity.

For the democratic road to socialism is one of continual struggle: Mass struggle for concrete objectives as the condition for any progress; the struggle of ideas about the substance of the changes needed; electoral struggle to enable the people's will to be expressed in a democratic way.

Every step forward is necessarily a step back for capital, and constitutes a starting point in the struggle to impose further retreat. Only with a succession of stubborn struggles can greater and greater victories for democracy be won, step by step; only in this way can the level of awareness of the masses be raised, contradictions be overcome, and the illusions born of the aspiration for change be destroyed, the conditions for a broad and lasting reconciliation between communists and socialists be established, the new forces for transforming society be won over to action. This alone is what will make it possible to change the balance of social and political forces in such a way as to make possible the critical transformations.

B. A Realistic Option

There is nothing arbitrary or voluntaristic about this option for France. If it indeed responds to the concrete problems of French society, it is because its provisions result from in-depth analysis, illumined by the lessons of practical action, of the realities of the nation, the crisis and the contemporary world.

It is important to fully assess both the reasoning and the practical effects. For the delay in elaborating it is not entirely a thing of the past: In certain respects, it still characterizes our political practice. The effort to understand quite clearly the basis on which this historic option rests is thus an immediate and permanent necessity.

1. Socialism and Realities in France

It is first of all to the realities our nation faces that the party looks for a response adapted to the problems facing its struggle for a socialist transformation of society.

For French Communists, that national dimension of their action and their struggle goes back a long way. Since the 1930's it has inspired a number of important initiatives from our party. This is precisely what has made it an organic part of the French national character.

Moreover, taking full account of the unique traditions and national conditions of each people is very much in the spirit of scientific socialism as opposed to any kind of abstract view of things. But one must certainly realize that for a long period of time a concept fundamental to Marxism as formulated by Marx and Engels was dormant. This was the idea that "Communism for us is neither a /state/ that must be created nor an /ideal/ on the basis of which reality must be regulated. We call communism the /real/movement which abolishes the present state." That living and concrete concept of history was contradicted by the idea that long prevailed of a single model of socialism.

The 22nd Congress freed us from that. Each country's transition to socialism, and the kind of socialism it builds, while necessarily obeying general laws drawn from experience, varying of course with historical conditions, follows its own blueprint, not a master plan adorned with national particularities. They are all unique in their very essence.

French Uniqueness

The reality in France today is that it is a great, advanced capitalist country. But what we need to see behind that general characterization is the unique physiognomy hidden behind it, molded out of an especially rich and varied history.

France is the country where the secular struggle for freedom went further than anywhere else in affirmation of the universal rights of man and the citizen, the importance of secularism, pluralism and personal freedom. Through innumerable struggles for freedom of conscience and expression, which intellectuals have made echo throughout the country and the world, great mass and humanitarian causes have been won. Through intense class struggles a deep democratic imprint has been given to our institutions; there has been a veritable politicization of the masses which the upper middle class is trying to weaken by stirring up the idea of rejecting politics. The growth of the worker movement has increased the stakes involved in the struggle for freedoms. Their field has been enriched by the struggles for union rights, social rights, the right for women and young people to vote. Given momentum by the victories of 1936 and 1945, the movement for freedom to join associations has flourished extensively since 1968. Thus, despite the fundamental restraints it encounters in capitalism, the aspiration to live in freedom is widespread and shows exceptional diversity in France.

France is also a very complex confusion of modes of ownership. The role of a numerous and diversified rural and urban lower middle class was considerable up until recent decades. A number of workers combine salaried labor and continued activity on the land. Personal ownership of housing is becoming widespread. Tradesmen and small enterprises occupy a big place which is in constant change. The worker and peasant movement, on the other hand, has marked out the path to the development of cooperative and mutualist forms. These complex realities influence attitudes, particularly among new members of the wage-earner class. The defense of one's own interests is not easily changed into class struggle to reduce social inequalities--struggles which respect those forms of property for what they contribute to individual freedom and the vitality of the economic and social fabric. More slow to develop than it was in other capitalist countries, monopolistic ownership of the large productive apparatuses and trade got a firm grip. but the advances of the Popular Front and the Liberation gave birth to a large public sector with remarkable dynamism, which is largely responsible for the popularity of nationalization as a political call to action.

France, though it must deal with local prerogatives that have their roots in a distant past, nevertheless has an exceptionally centralized and articulated state apparatus which is a powerful factor for national cohesion, but one which has been the instrument of all the forces of reaction in a country which has known absolutism, bonapartism, the Versailles traditions of the middle class, and more recently, presidentialism. At the same time, the republic is the fruit of great struggles in which the masses were actively involved. The tradition going back to the Jacobins which sees in centralism a democratic weapon against reactionary parochialism, the long history of a parliamentary system in which much progress was made from the top,

thanks to the secret ballot--without ever compromising the capitalistic system itself--have solidly implanted the tradition of delegation of power. This was a considerable achievement for an upper middle-class that was very experienced in the art of maintaining its hegemony whatever the circumstances.

but France also has a worker movement which has been stamped by these realities and these combats, and a movement which has affected them in turn. Anarcho-syndicalism, the social Christian movement, and above all the socialism of Guede, Lafargue and Jaures have become components or reference points for the people's and the nation's thinking. The influence the CGT [General Confederation of Labor] has won as engendered among the workers--at the cost of constantly renewed effort--the concept of class unionism. Rooted in the masses for a number of generations, our party has forged a revolutionary current which plays a major, though bitterly disputed, role in the life of the country. The resulting disposition of forces today reflects a highly unique political situation.

All these features make up the French national character, which is both historically determined and constantly changing. This is what makes France quite different from the FRG or Great Britain, even more so from the United States or Japan. It is this which gives the crisis in French society a primarily national dimensions.

The France of today has a whole set of unique assets accumulated over its long history: Extremely varied industrial and agricultural resources, a highly if unequally developed productive apparatus, very skilled and experienced workers, remarkable technological breakthroughs, world-class scientific activity and artistic life, some of the most advanced social accomplishments in the world, international renown of the highest order.

But France is also burdened with the sum of the contradictions and complex problems nourished by a crisis which has aggravated disparities, unsettled the nation's cohesion, started a disturbing though not irreversible decline: A high standard of living but with enormous social and regional inequalities; high economic and cultural potential but blemished by gaps; high productivity, but with the workers abused by exploitation; efficiency of investment but compromised by the methods and orientations of big capital; a deeply rooted civilization but a social fabric coming undone; substantial international potential, but held back by European and Atlantic integration.

It is starting from this concrete reality that we have built up our national strategy.

French-style Socialism

Socialism in France cannot be defined just in terms of variations on a general model. We must set out the concrete solutions appropriate to a uniquely determined society.

This is what our 22nd Congress did with respect to key questions about the transition to socialism such as socialization of the big instruments of production and trade, the creation of the worker's political power, the democratic transformation of social relations.

We broached the question of property by defining a socialism which has nothing to do with "collectivism." In order to break the dominance of big capital and open up a solution to the crisis, it is necessary to carry out efficient and democratic

nationalizations affecting the whole of the banking sector and the big capitalist groups in industry, commerce and the service sector. But that has nothing to do with any intention of making all property communal. Private property will have its place in French-style socialism, right alongside public property, cooperative social property, municipal property, departmental property, and regional property; Personal ownership of articles to be consumed or used, naturally; and also small individual and family holdings, peasant and artisanal property, commercial and industrial property, all of which will find socialism helpful in surmounting the current difficulties and regaining prosperity.

Similarly, with regard to the state, the 22nd Congress reached a critical turning point in our thought when it rejected, as far as France was concerned, the dictatorship of the proletariat, any concept of a totalitarian state, extrapolating Marx's thought on the Paris Commune: The great revolutionary task is "for society to recapture the state so as to become its driving force instead of the force which dominates and subjugates it." The relations between workers and the state must be completely changed: The state should become not only the representative government but the instrument by which the masses themselves, involved at all levels, participate in democracy, thus finally enabling the working class to gain access to management functions. This is the thrust of all our proposals to democratize institutions and advance toward self-management in a vigorous way.

This is also true of freedom. The 22nd Congress defined the socialism we want as a new era of freedom, of every kind of freedom, except the freedom to exploit the labor of others: Basic individual and collective freedoms which must be given more depth, and new freedoms which must be won: Freedoms in enterprise, in the neighborhood, in the state, in every domain of life; freedoms in information, education, creativity and culture, where pluralism must become the rule.

Since that time we have continued to push on with our delineation of the French character. It was in that spirit, for example, that we deepened our analysis of the essentially national nature of the crisis, advanced the demand for increased French production, for high priority to investment in France. As supporters of increased growth, we have demonstrated the necessity of re-establishing at a national level the coherence of our economic activities, our know-how, our technological and scientific advances, our efforts toward social justice and training, our regions and our commerce, our culture and our language--with the object of promoting a unique system to achieve the flowering of the individual in the context of the flourishing of the nation. Having been on the receiving end of oppression, we formed the Committee for the Defense of Freedoms and Human Rights in France and around the world.

In the same spirit we tackled the question of France's place in its international environment. We reaffirmed it: While respecting its alliances, we intend to preserve its independence whatever the circumstances, and guarantee its people the freedom to choose their own destiny. That also determines the French road to socialism, the only one through which it is possible, while still maintaining good international relations, to carry out the necessary transformations without damage. Concerned for its security and the imperatives of its defense, we spelled out in 1977 a policy which, while drawing on the military tradition of a democratic army serving the people and the nation, took into account the role of the French strike force. Aware of France's international responsibilities, we took a position favoring a Europe of workers, considering the example of the initiative toward a new international order.

The fecundity of that initiative is inexhaustible, like the French character itself. It should inspire our thoughts in every domain and at all levels of life. In sum, by the content and form of our initiatives, our proposals, our participation in the war of ideas, we always carry out our political action energetically.

In this way socialism will flower in France. In return, France will flower under socialism. Really only socialism, by giving our people full control over the means of labor, life and decision-making, will free the national character from its present shackles and distortions.

In 1936, at the Congress of Villeurbanne, in the face of the mounting Fascist danger and the abandonment of the nation's interests by the upper middle class, our party called on the workers to "reconquer France." We continue that appeal today by calling on them, in the face of the threat of decline which sees the same class interests at work under quite new conditions, to give the nation a new birth under socialism.

2. The Democratic Path and The Realities of the Crisis

It is also starting from the realities of the crisis in which French society is plunged that we define our fundamental options.

Our party was the first to see and say, more than 10 years ago, that France was entering a profound, general, lasting crisis. It was caused by the fact that the capitalist structures, the profit motive, the type of growth which prevailed, were absolutely unable to meet the needs and challenges of our day, marked by the take-off of science and technologies, and by the determination of men and women to be free. Too much accumulation of private capital, too much exploitation of the workers, too much pressure and too many deductions on [the income of] the other people in our society, made the crisis break out.

Everything since that time has confirmed the fact that this analysis went to the heart of the matter and there could be no real end to the crisis without challenging the dominance of capital, without deep democratic transformations that moved toward socialism.

But in order to get the masses oriented in that direction, it is not enough that socialism is the objective response to the problems facing us.

The Contradictory Nature of the Crisis

For the Crisis is fundamentally riddled with contradiction.

It contains previously unsuspected opportunities, and is the crucible of new aspirations, but at the same time we have seen the proliferation of disorders of all kinds, the accumulation of the most serious problems, which absorb millions of men and women in a daily effort to scrape by and put millions of others in a dependent position and tend thereby to narrow horizons, discourage action, turn more and more people in on themselves or lead them toward illusory escapism.

The crisis is a thirst for change, but at the same time it is fear of change: Fear of losing one's job, one's property, one's rights, one's freedoms; fear of economic chaos, of moral anarchy, of political events; fear of war; fear that the future will be even worse than the present--all those fears about the year 2000 that are dashing hopes to cruelty today.

The crisis is system-wide, but does not affect all equally. It creates both disparities and solidarities. It masks the fundamental antagonism between the workers and big capital--which remains for many a distant and abstract reality--behind innumerable fallacious but palpable and daily conflicting interests: Between someone headed for ANPE [National Employment Agency] and someone who has work; between the temporary worker, the probationer, the fill-in employee and the one who has a steady job and statutory protections; between the OS and the technician, the engineer, the white-collar worker; between the person who has training and culture and the one who does not; between the inhabitant of one region and the inhabitant of another, between the immigrant and the Frenchman, youth and adult, man and woman.

The crisis is th sharpened form of conflict between the new that is emerging and the old which is fighting hard for its position.

We must therefore put aside any onesided or mechanistic view of its evolution. Nothing would be more futile than to wait for change and socialism to come from some liberating catastrophe, some spontaneous and ineluctable foundering of the capitalistic system.

The Political Dimension of the Crisis

As a result, we must take the full measure of the political dimension of the crisis. At the same time that current political realities have made socialism a real prospect, they have also engendered ideas and attitudes that could thwart or lead astray the will to change. This is especially the case because the upper middle-class is playing on these contradictions to exploit them for its own benefit.

The worsening of the lot of the workers and the country as a whole has resulted in recent years in increasing discontent, increasing struggle, in which the CGT and our party have played an essential role. The Giscardian government was in trouble. Its base with the masses was continually being eroded. Aware of the magnitude of the danger, the upper middle class, without yielding an inch in terms of its class orientation, made efforts on a broad front to adapt to the situation. With all its resources, it launched a political and ideological counter-offensive to safe guard its power and at the same time its profits.

Its first objective was to convince people that the crisis was inevitable, and thus that no policy other than its own was possible. To that end it played on a contradictory feature of the situation. The crisi is above all national in nature, it has its source in the class dominance which big capital has imposed in every domain throughout the country. But what is true of France is also, in different ways, true for the other capitalist countries. The crisis therefore also has international dimensions, which in turn influence the unfolding of the crisis in every country.

By dissimulating the first and fundamental aspect, government propaganda tried to give the crisis the look of an external inevitability, and pointed the finger at a "harsh and dangerous" world and in particular at the oil-producing countries. Against that backdrop it presented policies of austerity, redeployment, and profitability as the realistic and courageous options, called by the term "solidarity" the division of the sacrifices to be made among the people of the country, and the policy of monopolistic integration with the world outside our borders.

At the same time, the upper middle class tried to disparage progress and uproot revolutionary ideas. Everything possible was done to turn work into exploitation, the new technologies into unemployment, scientific progress to dehumanization, public intervention into statism. On all sides there was an effort to arouse--even, and especially among the most disadvantaged--a great fear of change that was identified as "collectivism" and "totalitarianism." The history of socialist countries is not unblemished by problems and mistakes: A defamation campaign has depicted them as the hell of the 20th Century. Throughout all these efforts, the constant and central aim was anticommunism. Our policy was the target of obsessive distortion on television and radio, in the newspapers and in books. No indignity was spared out party, its militants, its leaders. Our people were being made to despair of their future.

This counter-offensive was crowned by a defense of resignation and consensus. The crisis continued to generate new tragedies and setbacks: In the schools, in job hirings, in personal life, and in social relations. The dominant ideology and culture blamed the victims, sowed in them the spirit of skepticism and resignation. The precariousness and dependence of their conditions, aggravated by crumbs of assistance and repression, encouraged passivity. The secular tradition of delegation of power was exploited to the full by authoritarianism and bureaucratism. The government played on all divisions, denouncing the least disadvantaged as well-off, attacking the most combative as dangerous partisans of dire change, exploiting thoroughly the divergences within the labor movement and the disunity of the Left to gain acceptance for its own policy.

But nothing happened. In that war against the forces of change, the Right lost a major battle. But to think that the Left's electoral victory could have dissipated the weight of these realities and these backward attitudes as if by magic would be naive. Today no less than yesterday, though under different conditions, the aspirations for greater justice, freedom, responsibility, dignity, the will to work, live and make decisions in a new way, in a word everything which encourages struggle, union, change and might nourish the idea that the solution lies in socialism--all that must battle its way through the contradictory realities of the crisis and of an intense political and ideological battle.

This is the basic origin of the principal obstacle which absolutely must be overcome to move forward: The considerable gap between the objective requirements of social transformation and the political awareness of the masses as they are, between the level of the solutions required for ending the crisis and the level of objectives around which it is presently possible to mobilize the broad support indispensable for progress.

This is the major problem we must work to resolve.

Moving Toward Self-Management

Under these conditions, to think that one might be content to propagandize in support of an overall program, even the best possible program, and thereby gather together the forces needed when the time comes, is illusory. That would just be another way of perpetuating the radically utopian idea of "someday."

Neither can we get around the problem by passing the buck to the top, by relying on the government to do everything, even when it is a Leftist government that includes communists. The big questions being addressed at the top are mostly condensed versions of those being raised at the bottom. They will not be resolved at the time unless there is progress at the bottom.

So we do not have the luxury of doing without a patient and determined struggle to address the great problems with the workers themselves, starting from their experience in daily life, in concrete situations where the crisis works its harm in all aspects of their lives. The obstacles to self-managing socialism can only be overcome by self-management itself, by the involvement of the workers as they take on themselves the responsibility for changing the situation.

Only by struggling to change whatever is bad can it be demonstrated that things could be better and only in this way can it be shown how they could be better. Only the conquest of new positions, as we said in the 23rd Congress, will create the leverage and bring about the new balance of forces needed for more ambitious advances, only this will increase awareness of the real causes of the crisis and the real means of resolving it, thereby reducing step by step the gap between the possible and the necessary.

This means better clarification of the steps needed and at the same time as rapid progress as is possible, setting forth objectives that respond to the needs of the workers and the country, objectives that are simultaneously transformative--in other words they constitute a break with the logic of the crisis--stricken capitalist system--and realistic--in other words they can be achieved with struggle. At the same time, we must be perfectly clear about the ins and outs, politically speaking, of each of these struggles.

This is the self-managing, democratic path we have chosen. It is a process which puts the present time in its proper context in the whole historical period we are living through. It is the only way to transform French society and move it toward socialism, rather than just ameliorating the crisis.

3. The French Road to Socialism and International Realities

Finally, it is in the context of a world undergoing profound transformation, and in light of the increasingly diversified experience of socialist countries, and in the spirit of a new internationalism, that we have made our strategic choices.

A New Balance of International Forces

In only a few decades, the world has changed more than in some whole centuries. Both the magnitude of the problems and also of the possibilities which are emerging from the contradictory movement of societies is a real change in history. We must look at our own progress from a historical vantage point to better assess its importance.

There is first of all the strengthening and conjunction of the principal liberating forces at work in the four corners of the earth.

Socialism has become a global reality, one which 1.5 billion men and women are now building on every continent. This work is not without its problems and mistakes, but the influence the socialist countries are exerting is already decisive and is going to be still more important in world developments in the future. This is true first of all from an economic point of view: Their share in world production, especially industrial production, is growing; their role is increasing in the development of new relations of cooperation. It is also true from the political point of view: Their initiatives in international organizations, their proposals and their actions in support of detente and disarmament carry great weight in the maintenance of coexistence and peace. It is primarily due to this influence, along with their military efforts to counterbalance the foolish arms race of imperialism, which has enabled us to know 36 years without a world war. For hundreds of millions of men and women who are still under imperialist domination, the socialist countries are a source of support in their struggle for national liberation, economic independence, and social emancipation. Thus socialism's contribution to humanity's progress is incontestable.

The capitalist world is experiencing a deepening of the crisis. Growing unemployment, inflation, industrial dismantling, monetary disorders and profoundly affecting life in society. The policies of reactionary or social-democratic crisis management, while they may have impeded the mass movement, are today having increasing problems. Major social and political struggles are increasing, especially in Europe. Aspirations for national dignity are being expressed forcefully in Northern Ireland. The will to change which in France made the Leftist victory possible is expressing itself forcefully in other countries as well. In the United States there are mass demonstrations of impressive size against Reagan's austerity policy. From London to Paris, from Rome to Copenhagen, from Tokyo to Bonn, the dominant feature of the mass movement is incontestably the protest against escalation of the arms race, the powerful push for peace.

Since 1945, 90 countries have been freed from colonialism and have step by step taken over the reins of development. This movement is still continuing today. Zimbabwe has victoriously shaken off the racist yoke. Right on the doorstep of the United States, the people of Nicaragua have overthrown the dictatorship of Somoza, while the struggles of people such as the Salvadorans are gaining strength. On every continent, imperialism is sustaining reverses. In Afghanistan, its attempt to liquidate the progressive regime and destabilize the whole region has failed. Its support for the butchers of the former Khmer regime is not preventing Cambodia from overcoming famine and beginning the task of reconstruction. Despite imperialist pressure, the Palestinian, Saharan, Namibian and other peoples are making progress in their courageous struggle to gain recognition of their national rights. There is a growing demand for a new economic and political order in the world, a demand expressed not least by the movement of the nonaligned countries, whose role and authority are respected.

Enormous emancipation movements, drawing support from these revolutionary and progressive currents, are preparing for action in every country: The struggle for human rights and freedoms, in which we are making a unique contribution; the struggle against all forms of racism and segregation; the struggle of youth to take their place in society and build for their future; the struggle of women for their full liberation, which is recognized as one of the primary factors for changing social relations and attitudes.

The simultaneous, or rather convergent, actions of these very diverse currents has changed the balance of forces to the point that imperialism can no longer carry on in its accustomed way. Humanity has the possibility of averting the unleashing of a third world war, of acting successfully to resorb local wars and tensions.

The second development which is creating upheaval in the contemporary world is the formidable accumulation of knowledge, the unprecedented advances in science and technology, which are revolutionising material production, challenging the old social structures and offering people the chance for the first time to gain control over their relations with nature and with themselves. This makes it all the more intolerable that even now, as we are nearing the end of the 20th Century, there are still places where entire peoples are dying of starvation, where there is no access to health care or education, where science is applied to murderous ends, where fantastic social and national inequalities are growing even worse.

The universal thirst for emancipation, the level attained by the productive forces and knowledge herald a new civilization. To move from the old world built on man's exploitation of man to a world of justice, freedom, dignity, and solidarity: That is the question. Ultimately it is the historically concrete question of moving from capitalism to socialism.

These transformations, both on the global scale and within each country, are the stakes of a formidable conflict. The forces of the past have everything to fear from this world in the making, especially since they must confront the problems in a context of the crisis in their system. So they are trying by every means possible to stem the change, to protect and indeed to reconquer their positions. This is the meaning of the counter-offensive imperialism has been waging for several years by adapting itself to the new conditions of the class conflict at the international level.

This counter-offensive has run into serious obstacles and has itself provoked fresh contradictions. The effort to give new life to European and Atlantic integration continues. Propelled by the United States, the imperialist countries are increasing discussion among themselves. But rival interests persist, and indeed are growing worse, for example in the monetary domain. The multinationals are trying to shift the brunt of the crisis increasingly on the common people, but they are running up against growing resistance and opposition.

Imperialism has not managed to deflect the fundamental current which on a global scale furthers a change in the balance of forces. In the most recent period it has been trying to upset the balance of military power and to attain supremacy in that domain. The United States has substantially increased its defense budget. It is trying to upgrade its network of foreign military bases, which has been jeopardized in some countries. It is exacerbating tensions instead of replying to offers for negotiated solutions. "Limited nuclear war" has developed into a doctrine which openly aims at focusing a hypothetical conflict on the continent of Europe. NATO's decision to install new American missiles in Europe and the decision to produce the neutron bomb are part of the same strategy. But that adventurist policy is going to have to take account of realities and world opinion.

The aggressiveness of imperialism is not a sign of its strength, but rather a sign that it is in critical condition. It expresses its problems confronting a world which is gradually getting out from under its domination. In no way of course does

this diminish the danger posed by the resurgence of the arms race, and by the escalation of mass means of destruction, which are inciting protests and make action for peace more necessary than ever.

We draw two lessons from this development.

The changes that have taken place in the world are opening up new opportunity to the world's struggling peoples not only the chance to avert war but also the chance to advance toward socialism along the path of their own choosing. This is one of the very pillars of our strategy. But, on the other hand, to turn these possibilities into realities will require an intensification of class struggle against imperialist plots, struggle for the preservation and consolidation of peace, peaceful coexistence, and solidarity with peoples struggling for progress and democracy.

This is particularly so with respect to the struggle for peace, with the PCF, loyal to its long tradition in this area and cognizant of the current attempts by imperialism to obtain military superiority, considers a major focal point of its struggle.

Today, peace and peaceful coexistence rest in large part on the overall military balance that has been established. Good sense counsels action to force a balanced and gradual reduction of all armaments. There must be negotiations without delay. This is what the socialist countries--and particularly the USSR in the 26th Congress of the CPSU--the neutral countries, the nonaligned movement, as well as the most diverse political, social, religious and intellectual circles throughout the world are proposing. In Europe, the need is for an immediate opening of negotiations to limit and reduce all categories of medium-range weapons, both American and Soviet.

But peace does not depend solely on parity in weaponry. It is not just a concern of sovereign states, either, but requires the active intervention of the people. In Europe, a mass peace movement on a scale rarely seen is taking shape in many different forms to oppose the installation of the new nuclear missiles and the production of the neutron bomb, against the presence of visiting military bases or the establishment of new ones, and supporting the creation of regional denuclearized zones. The PCF intends to take an active part in these struggles, both by its support of the activities of the peace movement as well as by its own activities, taking initiatives--alone or perhaps with others, such as communist parties, progressive and peaceful forces of various kinds, socialists, social democrats and Christians--to meet the demands of the situation and to encourage joint action for peace and disarmament.

It is also necessary to join hands with all revolutionary and progressive forces to work for international solidarity. This is an indispensable component of the class struggle being fought on a worldwide basis. Every step forward in a just cause, every victory for the people contributes to a favorable change in the balance of forces, restricts imperialism's freedom of maneuver and, by weakening it, opens up possibilities for other peoples. It is in this spirit that French Communists are showing their concrete solidarity with all forces around the world working for social emancipation, progress and socialism, freedoms and human rights, sovereignty and national independence, a new international order, and peace and disarmament.

Our own struggle for socialism in France, which is reinforced by the positive developments around the world, is of international importance in its own right, and persevering in it is the greatest contribution we can make to the common struggle of all peoples.

Socialism Today

The experiences of revolutionary forces around the world, the diversity of the processes by which socialism is built, have also enriched our thinking and our struggle.

In the face of frantic attempts to discredit socialism as it is practiced today, the 23rd Congress made an overall assessment of what it has brought to each of the peoples concerned and to humanity as a whole. The years since then have only confirmed the validity of that assessment.

As for ourselves, we are trying to assess the movement and the contradictions in the socialist countries realistically, without blinkers or prejudices. Anyone who tries to be objective is led to reject the caricature of socialist countries as a uniform bloc of societies mired in totalitarianism. In truth, despite the legacy of feudalism, capitalism, and colonialism these countries have had to overcome, despite the obstacles of every kind and the brutal wars imperialism has imposed on them, despite the serious conceptual and practical consequences of Stalinism, which were alien to the very spirit of socialism, these countries have in only a short time enjoyed the fruits of sweeping development and revolutionary change in every domain.

Beyond the fact that their progress has created an international balance of forces that is supportive of peace and progress, they have ended with man's exploitation of man, with hunger, illiteracy, and in almost every case with unemployment. They have achieved results about which the French public most often knows very little. What do people know, for example, about their industrial and agricultural successes, their technological and scientific progress, their impressive social and cultural achievements, the unique forms of mass participation which they have engendered and strengthened under a great variety of conditions?

This trend toward progress, and toward more rapid progress than the capitalist world, is being confirmed today. The studies of the World Bank show that the gross domestic product in the socialist countries taken as a group had an average annual growth rate of 5.6 percent between 1970 and 1978, higher than the previous decade, while by contrast the rate for the capitalist countries fell to 3.2 percent for the same period. While most capitalist countries are currently experiencing zero growth and sometimes even negative growth, and their prospects for the coming years are uncertain, growth continues in most of the socialist countries, albeit at a more moderate pace. Western experts predict that it will continue to be higher than the rate [of growth] in capitalist countries in the period 1985-1990. This immensely important prospect is one of the principal sources of the anxiety and aggressiveness shown by imperialism toward the socialist countries.

There will, of course, be problems along the way. First of all, there are problems relating to the international environment: Problems relating to the crisis in the capitalist world, such as deterioration of the terms of trade and the repercussions of monetary disorders; also the constraints resulting from the arms race the imperialists have dictated. In addition, there is the burden of the many-faceted assistance it provides to peoples struggling for their independence and development.

Above all, particularly for the socialist countries in Europe, there are the contradictions and problems resulting from progress itself. In moving away from extensive and toward intensive development, they will have to work harder to combine

the economic efficiency which the scientific and technological revolution both makes possible and demands, the social progress that the new and diversified needs of their people require, and the practice of democracy, which conditions the solutions to the problems in every domain. Experience shows that democracy is the key to their development. This does not only refer to administrative steps, which in particular countries have taken the place of the necessary political and ideological struggle--measures with which we disagree--and which, more fundamentally thwart the growing aspiration for greater democratization in the total life of society, decentralization of responsibilities, a liberation of initiative at every level in society. That reinforces the view of our 23rd Congress on socialism as the vehicle needed to respond to the universal demand for democracy. Only an effort to address all these problems together can enable these countries to move to higher stages of development.

Articulating the response to this challenge is the present concern of most of the socialist countries, which are carrying out novel experiments and entering new realms of thought, carrying out important reforms that are well-adapted to the realities and demands of their own concrete situation, sometimes with encouraging success. The elaboration of measures of decentralization and initiatives to increase the amount of responsibility given workers in the USSR, experiments in the autonomous operation of enterprises and various forms of self-management in Hungary and Bulgaria, the struggle against bureaucratism in Vietnam, new power in the hands of the people in Cuba: Our media are silent about these initiatives, of which the above are only a few examples, but they nevertheless exist and continue to grow.

Without a doubt, there will be errors and false starts in this path. But procrastination only leads to more problems, which can become quite serious. This is what is shown in the situation in Poland, where basic questions about the economic system, and [the degree of] social and political democracy have been raised. It is up to the Polish nation to find solutions to these problems, and socialism offers the possibility.

Socialism, like any living thing, continues to evolve and diversify. With every new decade, more peoples are choosing this path, in Asia, in Central America, in Africa. From Belgrade to Hanoi, from Havana to Luanda, socialism is being built by peoples with very diverse histories, very unique traditions, and the most varied attitudes. Far from seeing this as a cause for concern or as a handicap, we see this development as natural and healthy.

This growing differentiation confirms us in our own determination to advance toward socialism on a unique path, without in any way diminishing our solidarity with the parties and people building socialism in their own ways, and without claiming our own concept is a model to be copied by others.

A New Internationalism

In that spirit, we are pleased with the new relationships that exist today between communist parties. We have long been in favor of relations based on independence, strict equality of rights, noninterference, the search for flexible and effective forms of common action to reach common objectives, recognition of the right to differing points of view and eventually to divergence on particular questions. This concept pervades all our practice. Specifically, this was shown in early 1980 in the important meeting between our party and the Soviet party, a meeting which determined the nature of our relations and our common action on the basis of respect for our

divergent views on some questions. It is also attested by the number and extent, the form and substance of the initiatives we have taken jointly with other communist parties and progressive movements in recent years.

We are desirous of expanding relations with all communist parties, including the Chinese and the Albanian, which have broken relations with us. In our view China's position on international issues, though in complete opposition to our own, especially with respect to European issues, is no obstacle to the resumption of normal relations between our two parties.

We are paying increased attention to improvement of our solidarity and our ties of cooperation with the liberation movements and all progressive forces struggling in many different ways and under many different conditions. The PCF is determined to press on with its efforts to build a new internationalism that measures up to all the progress being made in the world.

At the same time, we see that our own interests are being greatly advanced by the fact that the communist parties in a number of capitalist countries--including our own--have made development of democracy the core of the roads to socialism they are offering in their respective countries. This is what has been called Eurocommunism, though the term is questionably because it is so narrow. We see that this same demand for democracy is being encountered today far beyond the bounds of our own continent, among parties and liberation movements acting in extremely diverse environments. We are pleased to see this.

Finally, our party is ready to talk about specific joint actions with the European social-democratic and socialist parties, and more generally throughout the world, for objectives that advance the interests of the peoples concerned, especially for peace and disarmament. It intends to continue its efforts to engage in positive cooperation with Christian forces.

A democratic advance toward a democratic socialism concretely adapted to the realities of France, to the realities of the contemporary world: Such is the overall program which the PCF offers our people. It is the party's response to the fundamental issues we face in the current situation.

C. The Democratic Advance Today

The defeat of Giscard d'Estaing and the social and political forces he represented has made the question of change, its substance, and its extent the focal point of public attention. The answer to this question, which has dominated debate within the Left in recent years, is not predetermined.

A New Situation

After this summer's political victory, millions of workers have come to understand that their lot is being improved, that the most serious problems, such as unemployment and inflation, are beginning to be resolved, and the country is beginning to pull out of the problems in which it has been mired. In the crisis environment which continues to make its effects harshly felt, that is not possible without taking the path of transformations, all of which threaten the dominance of big capital.

This is why every step forward in this direction becomes the subject of a real class confrontation.

In the face of the initial government measures taken on the right road, the upper middle class, the forces of the Right, began to mobilize and organize themselves to prevent any progress. Within the Left, some forces that contributed to the electoral victory of 10 May want to avoid confrontation with capital out of a fear of seeing the working class play a major role in it. They are openly calling for class collaboration, trying to limit mass involvement, to channel the struggles, to weaken our party.

But the workers expect a great deal from the new majority and the new government, which must therefore take on the task of not dashing their hopes. Our party, by the force of its ideas and its actions, can in that context contribute to significant progress. We are seeing this already in several issues on which it has been waging a hard fight on the workers' behalf in recent years.

Thus, it is in no way predestined that the present situation will lead the country into a social-democratic experiment. It is possible to implement a different policy instead of merely managing the crisis to further the interests of big capital.

Our Party's Attitude

It was in terms of this analysis that we considered the election results, and thus the mandate it gave for changing society and the pace of that change, and we decided to do everything possible to make it succeed.

In that spirit, our party engaged in a dialogue with the PS to determine if there was sufficient convergence to make joint governmental action possible. Once it was decided that this was in fact the case, it reached a concrete political accord and decided to participate on this basis in the government.

That decision, which responds to the profound aspirations of millions of French men and women, is fully in accordance with the political direction defined by our 23rd Congress, whose resolution said: "We are and we will always be ready to assume our full responsibilities on behalf of the workers and the people at every level, including the government. We particularly want to participate in the management of the affairs of France because unless we do the workers will not get the changes they need."

And this is an event whose importance has not yet been fully realized. For the first time in 34 years, communists are participating in the government of one of the great countries of the capitalist world. Already the workers can see what a gain that is for them in their struggles. They know that our party will do everything in its power to justify their hopes.

Going Forward

In thus abiding by the decision made by the voters, we are obviously in no way renouncing our own ideas and our own proposals. By situating ourselves loyally in the new majority, we are furthering our own plan of action and affirming our own uniqueness.

This is true within the government where with flawless solidarity we keep the commitments made with the PS. It is true in the National Assembly and the Senate, in the local communities and regions, where our elected officials, while taking a part in the new majority, are advancing their own initiatives, too, on the basis of the commitments made to their voters. And it is also true throughout the country, in the enterprises and localities, where we as a revolutionary party play our unique and independent role.

This multifaceted contribution the communists are making to implementation of a new policy is absolutely irreplaceable. For the class struggle did not end on 10 May. Quite to the contrary, the profound reforms which it is now a matter of implementing raise the stakes and make the struggle all the more bitter. The workers know through long experience that in the daily fight against capital the PCF is the party which is always found at their side. They can also see for themselves now that it knows equally well how to take up its responsibilities in the governing of the country. Experience shows them, and will continue to show them, that they need a big communist party.

It is manifestly, therefore, in the interest of the masses for it to regain its influence. To those men and women who usually vote for the PCF but to whom it may have seemed more useful, particularly in the last election, to vote for another party, we said from the beginning that we still considered them communist voters. Today there is every reason for them to think seriously about that. The working men and women of the country, realizing that our showing in the election did not give us the power to carry out everything we would like, realizing also that our participation is indispensable for success, will be doing themselves a good service if they strengthen the communist party by giving it their support. We are confidently looking ahead to the future.

Nothing is ever won or lost before the battle. What must be seen clearly to understand the present situation is that for the first time since the 22nd and 23rd Congress, we have favorable conditions for successfully implementing our strategy.

The future will depend in large part on our ability to fully implement that strategy in the situation open before us from now on.

III. A NEW POLITICAL PRACTICE

Our strategy requires a fresh look at the problem of our political activity. This new situation is becoming ever more apparent. Our party, the party of class struggle, is now also a member of the majority in power, a government party. This is a situation the overwhelming majority of its supporters have never known.

So it is necessary for every communist, and every party organization, to rise to this new occasion.

Of course, in doing this we draw on the ideas advanced by our last two congresses and the experiences accumulated in putting those ideas into practice. But the conclusion to be drawn from the period just past is that we have not yet made enough progress along the way. The present situation requires us to move faster and further.

1. A New Style of Mass Action

What does it mean, then, under today's conditions, to implement a new political practice?

Improve Conditions and Raise Consciousness

It means first of all making more of a reality of our strategy of democratic advance as a means to change conditions and awareness. This is the central question. It is essential to see clearly how it now presents itself.

In today's situation, all the great problems confronting French society in its current crisis are spread over the front pages of the newspapers: Unemployment and jobs, inflation and the high cost of living, nationalizations and expansion of workers' rights, tax reform, decentralization, pluralism and fairness in the news media, France's initiatives for peace and disarmament, and many others as well. They arise not only in governmental deliberations but everywhere in the country, in people's daily life. And this is happening in a context in which, despite the obstacles, it is possible to move forward.

It is not only possible, it is necessary. For if we did not move gradually but resolutely to resolve these great problems in such a way as to advance the interests of the workers and the nation, there could be no escape from the crisis. Failure to move in that direction would be to reach the failure on which the upper middle class is counting and openly working to realize.

Nothing is more important than to make this possibility and necessity clear to the workers, to all the popular forces. It is far from being obvious to everyone that this is so, and many ambiguities still surround the word "change," the real substance thereof, and the means it requires.

What needs to be done, then, in order to make progress on both fronts, solving the great problems and raising the consciousness of the workers? It all boils down to how to implement our strategy in a new mode of mass action.

The first requirement, which determines all the others, is to carry our activity into the field and into life, at the times and places where these fundamental problems are affecting the people--into their concrete problems, their demands and their struggles. We must be on the scene, we must take action, we must be creative, in discussing with them how to resolve them, in defining with them the objectives to advance as well as what is possible to attain, in carrying out with them the kind of action that will have a chance of success. The great watchword should be: Begin now to change things.

The workers must do their utmost to gain new ground, to win their rights, to win their freedoms, to take every position possible. And in that struggle it is necessary both to draw attention to the victories won and also to point out their limits--to increase understanding of the causes of the crisis and its basic solutions, the class interests involved in pulling out of the crisis, in order that with increasing experience there will be greater readiness to carry out the more radical transformation that will get the country solidly on the road to recovery.

It is in the very process of acting to move things forward that we must make the workers more aware of our ideas. The way to be better understood is to come up with original ideas. This is the way to make an impact in the debates on the major issues that arise from day to day, issues such as the role of the working class in the nation, the contribution of science to progress, the conditions for renewed growth or self-management, the new world order. This is the way to get people to understand that our version of socialism is no dream, but something that directly corresponds to the needs of the workers, the demands of the situation, and the potential of our country and our time. In short, while not claiming to have solved all the problems ahead of time, we must draw attention to the novel ideas we are proposing. In this way we will light up the path in front of us step by step.

This is what we must do, with all our strength, all our creativity and all our tenacity. It is true at every level: At the level of the government and the assemblies, but also, and above all, in the country as a whole, in enterprises, in the major social groups, wherever all the problems of the crisis are setting in and where the principal battles are being fought. We must do so by making use of all the new opportunities before us today: Those, for example, opened up by new rights which should protect the workers in the nationalized companies; and those rights which should protect the workers in the nationalized companies; and those that should be opened up by the new powers of elected assemblies in the regions, the departments and the municipalities. Our elected officials, whether they are in the majority or the opposition, now have an unprecedented opportunity to influence by the power of ideas, while remaining attentive to the quality of their relations with the people and the implementation of self-management.

It is through this mass activity involving all communists, in conjunction with the intensification of the workers' struggles, that we intend to advance--at the pace the people themselves decide--all the way to socialism, through democratic victories won by our people.

Take Into Account The Interests and Aspirations of All

Engaging in this kind of political activity implies taking into account the interests and aspirations of all components of the working class, from the most exploited class to the technicians, including every category of manual and intellectual worker.

Now in our actual practice, the justified concern to respond better to the needs of those working men and women who are having the most serious problems has sometimes resulted in less attention to others, as if priority meant exclusivity. We should be attentive at the same time to dealing with the problems of all workers in whatever category or situation, and at the same time this would gain broader understanding of the necessity, as we see it, of giving the working class its rightful place and role in the life of the nation.

Our foremost concern is to express and defend the interests of the working class.

Whatever may be said by theoreticians about its supposed decline, the fact remains that the historic role of the working class continues to grow. This is not ideology--it is a fact. In its full dimensions it represents almost half the actively working population. It is the driving force in the process of production. As the foremost and primary victim of the crisis, it is the force most interested in change. Barred from responsibility and power by capital, it has acquired combat experience and

organizational skill which gives it political capability that is irreplaceable for the nation. Its involvement is decisive for making progress in the class struggle. Its demands, its aspirations, are at the heart of all the great problems of French society. Satisfying them is not in their interest alone, but in the interest of all the other categories of workers and of the nation itself.

As the productive forces have grown, their historic role has expanded. Scientific and technological progress, by greatly intensifying the social nature of production, has made it more and more dependent on a real "collective worker" incorporating all the productive functions. The quality of the labor force has risen, both in terms of the workers' skill level and in terms of the fact that today most technicians--as well as most clerks and some engineers--are in integral part of the working class, which underlines the growing role of intellectual work in production. Thus the working class's ability to take charge of the productive apparatus, so mismanaged by capital, has grown, as has its mastery of all the dimensions of the process of the revolutionary transformation of society.

The role of the working class is also being enhanced by the fact that its basic field of activity, industry, now occupies a central place in the life of the nation. That is where the great technological and social transformations that distinguish our epoch are manifested most clearly, and where the depths of the crisis are most harshly felt, both its causes and its effects. And it is where millions of workers--from OS's to technicians--clerks, engineers and cadres--are brought together, where new perspectives of worker collectives founded on free and responsible cooperation based on division of labor are opened up. Industry is the battlefield of choice in the class war. This is indeed why the employer class is making unprecedented ideological and political efforts there. Carrying the battle into industry and winning it should be the number one objective of the whole party.

Now since the 23rd Congress, we have noted a weakening of our struggle in business and industry, a weakening evidenced by the loss of several hundred cells. Of course, in part this reflects the large number of businesses being closed down in recent times, but also and above all it reflects insufficient activity on our part in that domain, from the central committee to the federal committees.

We must discover all the implications of this without further delay. It is here first of all that implementation of a new political practice needs to begin: Changing the scope and quality of our political activity and our initiatives in the struggle, enriching our store of understanding of everyday realities in business and industry, keeping a very close watch on the transformations taking place among the wage-earners and in the working class itself, maintaining the unity which requires incessant efforts. That our guiding forces at all levels of the party--central committee, federal committee, section committee--be deployed to further these objectives, in order to give impetus to concrete communist activity, to strengthen the party throughout business and industry, and particularly in big enterprises. The party as a whole should be convinced of it: The resurgence of its influence and the democratic march to socialism depend on it.

At the same time, we should increase ongoing activity to respond to the legitimate needs and aspirations of all classes of workers.

Lacking the cohesion and experience of the working class, clerical employees--their number having grown considerably--are pitted against working and living conditions which make their interests and those of the working class increasingly converge.

There is a new basis for sustained communist work among them, with the goal of seeing clerical employees in the civil service, the banks and insurance companies, the major stores, and all businesses and industries, take their place alongside the other workers in the struggle.

The number and role of engineers and white-collar workers have also grown with the rapid growth of science and technology. Involved more and more closely in the production process, they--like the workers--are victims of the industrial strategies dictated by the law of profit and monopolistic redeployment. We call on them to break loose from authoritarianism and the ideological pressures of the employer class and to take action to get recognition for the irreplaceable character of their functions and knowledge, which is not inconsistent with the effort to give the working class its rightful role in industry as in the nation.

The intellectual class today consists of 4.5 million men and women who are working in various fields of production, research, education, the arts, journalism, health, city planning, the judicial system, the public body. As the National Council of Bobigny emphasized in February 1980, their social status has profoundly changed. For the most part today they are, strictly speaking, intellectual laborers. Their mass defection to the ranks of those supporting societal change has become a historical possibility. But for many reasons the contradiction between the aspirations for change and the fears that it inspires often manifests itself in them in a particularly complex way. Winning over the great majority to the side of democratic and revolutionary struggle requires both persistent efforts to throw light on the class nature of the problems they are confronting and struggle alongside them to bring about a rebirth of French culture.

The peasants have felt the harsh effects of a policy which strikes against agriculture, restricts mass consumption, reduces incomes and leads to the liquidation of a number of family farms. Their opposition to that policy, their devotion to national independence, and the strengthening of cooperative activities--whose gains we are defending--create a solid basis for joint action by the peasants and working class. We will win them over in greater numbers still by struggling alongside them for their just demands, by defending the interests of French agriculture in a Common Market to which we are largely opposed, and by gaining wider support for our idea of a modern agriculture founded on family farming within the context of French socialism.

The tradesmen are among those most seriously victimized by capitalist centralization. Only by joining in with the struggle of the working class will they achieve their demands for social and fiscal justice, and the modernization of their useful independent economic activity.

The small and medium-sized enterprises in commerce and industry are also left exposed to the crisis. In every case we defend the interests of the workers there who are often still subject to forms of exploitation characteristic of past eras. At the same time we must show that these enterprises can only get out of their present difficulties and have solid prospects for the future through the advance to socialism.

Taking the interests and aspirations of all into account to a greater extent also means continuing and intensifying the work we have begun with women and young people.

The mass entry of women into the struggle is one of the major changes in our time. We are the party of their liberation, which will mark a new advance for civilization, one which will enrich the lives of both men and women. Now this movement forward is certainly not without its contradictions. Female manual laborers, clerical personnel, intellectuals, and agricultural workers, and of course women who are not in the job market, do not constitute a homogenous category and they perceive the means of their liberation in very diverse ways. One essential dimension of our own activity is to start from their own demands, their aspirations for equality, in order to win them over to the struggle for new rights, democratic progress and socialism.

Young people played a notable part in the victory of the Left. They aspire to be free from the injustices and social stratification which deprive them of real training, condemn them to unemployment and precarious jobs, thwarts their aspirations and bars them from responsibility. But things will not change unless the young people themselves change them. The democratic advance toward socialism, the struggle for peace and a new world order need the support of those millions. Now seeing the world as it is in crisis, today's youth, though they hold out great potential for the struggle, are at the same time susceptible to the degradation of the quality of social life today. They can only be helped to find the road to action if all the party organizations regularly engage the young people in frank and responsible dialogue, try to address their concrete problems, take initiatives alongside them and make them understand our proposals--while at the same time giving continual support to the Communist Youth Movement, the basic foundation of communist activity for the youth. Much remains to be done to actualize the recommendation made by the central committee in 1979 that every youth should be exposed to our call to join the struggle, from now on stand up for himself and build his future.

All of these efforts are indispensable if we are to put together the mass coalition of the majority which is a central objective of our strategy. But we must look at things without flinching from the facts: The extreme diversity of concrete situations, unique localized effects of the crisis, lifestyles, thought and action based on it make it a task of the greatest complexity. For we are past the stage when we can think of achieving a heterogenous coalition of the dissatisfied by calling on each group to abjure its identity in the cause of union. Without in any way trying to blur the differences and sometimes the opposed interests, we must by means of struggle and ideological warfare raise the level of awareness of the fundamental convergence of interests.

Act From Broader Unity

The same resolve to mobilize all our people motivates our appeal for all those men and women who, despite differences of philosophy, beliefs and paths, want to play a part in changing society, to join with us in common action.

We make this appeal to the faithful who are sensitive both to what is creating human suffering in the world and in France, and to the hopes expressed in the struggles of the masses, and who want to give active social expression to their faith. How could our struggle for justice and solidarity, democracy and self-management, peace and the new world order, the flourishing of the individual and respect for his dignity not find common ground with their aspirations? We continue to attach great importance to the broadening of dialogue and common action between Christians and communists. Without losing sight of the obstacles within the Church hierarchy

to such a reconciliation, but attentive also to all the movement taking place, we for our part are determined to bring a new dimension into our relations with Christian workers, with all believers, and make an effort to surmount the narrow-mindedness which may still hold them back.

This appeal is also addressed to all those who react as patriots to anything that diminishes France, alienates its independence, tarnishes its image in the world. Throughout their history the communists--and they know it--have always made the development of the nation, its independence and its security, a matter of the utmost concern. With the coming of the Left to power, ensuring France's continued existence as a great and sovereign nation and giving it a role in the world commensurate with its importance, are more than ever the priority tasks of the day, at this time inseparable from the march to socialism. Transcending our differences we want to unite all those who share these objectives.

This appeal is also addressed to men and women who are expressing their determination to live, work and exercise their freedom of choice in the country, who are taking action to preserve and enrich the identity of their region, who are militating for a France whose national unity is wedded to lively regional diversity, where the peoples of the regions can use their autonomy and democratic institutions to resolve the problems in their own domain themselves.

It is addressed to all men and women who are fighting in the most varied ways for a better quality of life and for the environment, for all causes of social and humanitarian solidarity.

In launching these appeals, we are not pursuing the aim of locking the great diversity of possible contributions to progress into stereotyped formulas of struggle and unity. We consider on the contrary that, because we are in the majority and participating in the government, unforeseen convergences cannot fail to emerge with men and women with whom up to now we have not usually taken joint action. We set forth this appeal without hesitation, since the objectives of the struggle clearly express the people's needs.

In short, we are ready to join hands with all, in the broadest possible union, for the interests of the people and the nation.

Communists, the Labor Movement and Interest Groups

Implementing such a strategy in such a way as to give it broader impact in the life of the nation gives our work with the masses greater impetus.

If we attach special importance to this dimension of the activity of the party proper, we nonetheless completely reaffirm the importance of the labor movement, the many forms of interest groups, which are one of the basic means whereby millions of people make an autonomous input on the most varied issues.

As was underlined in the still topical document on this subject published by our party in 1979, the French labor movement, where by virtue of continual struggle the spirit of class conflict prevails, is a decisive force in defending the rights of wage-earners and contributing to open up the road to social progress, freedoms and socialism.

Social movements, family movements, women's movements, cultural and athletic groups, associations of the parents of students, children, tenants, veterans, consumers, of retired persons, and others as well, which make up the rich diversity of French interest groups, enable millions of citizens to take united action to deal with their own problems.

The PCF bases its relations with these movements and organizations on mutual respect for the independence of each one, for its cause, for its freedom to analyze and criticize. On that basis, and without in any way hiding the affinities, differences or divergences that may exist, it is ready to build, with all the labor unions and interest groups that wish to do so, the bridges, the exchanges and the common ground that would be in the interest of the mass movement as a whole. It is struggling for the free development of interest group and trade union activity, as is shown by the record of its office-holders. Democratic socialism and the self-management for which we are fighting will help them flourish.

Appreciating the role these organizations play, communists are more than willing to contribute to their creation, their vitality and their initiatives. They intend to support them to a greater degree both by their presence and their activity. The guiding principle in every case is to do everything possible to insure that the organization of which they are members is serving the best interests of those who rely on it. It is in that spirit that they are assuming the responsibilities and carrying out the mandates that have been given them. Over long years of struggle within the labor and interest group movement, years of supportive and mutually enriching debates they have engaged in, the communists have given proof of their ability, their dedication and their capacity to work with everyone. Going even further in that direction is one of the important contributions they can make to the flourishing of the mass movement.

2. A Revolutionary Party Taking the Initiative

A new style of mass activity bringing to life a strategy of revolutionary scope: This is our whole response to the problems before us. But that response would mean nothing without a revolutionary party capable of opening up the way of self-managing socialism.

Higher Capacity to Take Initiatives, Higher Political and Ideological Level

At each of our congresses, we put the accent on the necessity of improving party activity, strengthening its organizations, raising its militants' level of training. There is no need today to restate the importance of those continuing demands. We must try to see what is qualitatively new in relation to them.

In organizing our whole strategy around continued struggle, in thereby giving a still more concrete meaning to our party's vanguard role, our 22nd and 23rd Congresses have engendered the existence of a new political practice among communists and party organizations, one that is profoundly different from that of earlier periods when conditions were different. Thus today it is really a question of adapting our political practice as far as possible, and in as lively a way as possible, to the tasks of today.

First of all there is the question of the party's capacity to take initiatives: Initiative from the leadership at all levels, which naturally remains indispensable;

initiative from the base organizations and the militants, who should be ready to respond promptly and with imagination and responsibility to the concrete possibilities springing to life, to implement our policy in a creative way--that is the critical question.

This poses even more forcefully than before the problem of the role of the cell, of all the cells, of their normal activities, their political discussion, their ability to take action, and thus the work of the cell bureaus. And that increases the need of the cell secretaries and the section leadership for political assistance, their involvement being essential in guiding thought and stimulating the mass actions of their organizations.

Greater capacity to take initiatives requires a higher political and ideological level. Today each communist, each party organization, in order to deal more quickly with more complex situations, should be prepared to meet and confront in daily life the great questions of societal change, and to address them both profoundly and concretely. They must be current on national and international developments, knowledgeable about the increased understanding and experience which underly our strategy, if they are to master it in depth, contribute to its elaboration and implement it with ever-increasing sensitivity.

This requires the party itself to be alive with real collective intellectual activity. At the same time this makes it indispensable for every communist to work and make personal efforts to widen his knowledge, enrich his culture, deepen his reflection, participate as actively as possible in the life of the party and the development of its policy.

This increases the importance of the flow of information and critical exchange of the results of experience, in which our press plays an irreplaceable role. This is also responsible for the necessity of a much larger effort to train communists at all levels of the party, the necessity of more readership and the struggle for our books and reviews. This is what gives such importance to creative theoretical research to implement the new ideas of the 23rd Congress on the living nature of our theory and its ties to our policy. In every domain, beginning with history and the social sciences, Marxism is more than ever before proving its fecundity in confrontation with other works and in public acknowledgement of the debt many works owe to Marxism. The launching of the Marxist Research Institute opens up broad vistas in all these domains.

Gaining Wider Public Acceptance for Our Policy

Taking the initiative also means gaining wider public acceptance for our policy through timely, direct propaganda linked to action, and intervening more and more quickly in the daily battle of ideas. We must make more efforts in that direction, particularly in business and industry. At the same time we must whip up the democratic demand for television and radio at last to tell the truth about our party, its activities and its proposals.

We are paying very special attention to our national press and our three regional dailies. Over the last 2 years great efforts have been expended to build the circulation of L'HUMANITE and L'HUMANITE DIMANCHE. They were successful in reversing the downward trend and made some progress in circulation. They are not yet up

to the level required, however. It is more indispensable than ever that all communists read our press, and first of all L'HUMANITE, which day after day expresses our policy and constitutes an irreplaceable means of exchanging experience within the party. Building its circulation further will make a powerful contribution to enlightening the workers and increasing our influence. So this should be of still more concern to all the party leadership.

Efforts should at the same time be continued to improve the circulation of REVOLUTION, so that our weekly can fully play its role in the political, ideological and cultural life of the country.

A Stronger Party

To take such initiatives in every direction is unthinkable without a mass party to gear down its relations with the population and thus very strongly established, right where it is most decisive: In businesses and industries--big, medium-sized and small--where millions of manual and intellectual workers, both men and women, are assembled, as well as in the poorer neighborhoods.

With 700,000 members, 28,000 cells, including more than 9,000 in businesses and industry, our party already has considerable strength. The major progress made in this field since the 22nd Congress is one of the signs of the fecundity of the strategy the party adopted at that time.

But it is not enough when it is a question of forging a mass coalition bringing together the great majority of the nation.

In that regard, it is of capital importance to fully appreciate the possibilities open in the present political situation. Tens, hundreds of thousands of men and women, the young people especially, with great diversity in origins, training, experience and even in philosophical or religious beliefs could join our party. They wanted the Left to win. They now want it to succeed and want to do their best to help it do so. Even where they do not yet understand our party very well, they know that they can count on it. We are holding a place for them. They must be welcomed wholeheartedly.

This naturally requires making a special effort to integrate the new adherents rapidly, make very significant improvements in the way they are received into our organizations, undertake an intensive educational campaign to help them assimilate our policy and translate it into their lives, thus validating from the start the correct choice they have made.

A More Deeply Democratic Life

All that leads us to continue the effort to enrich the democratic life of the party.

This question should be a constant concern of every communist and of the whole party. At a time when the revolutionary struggle is faced with fresh challenges, when there is ever-increasing aspiration for more responsibility, when we ourselves have made democracy the centerpiece of our strategy, the conscious participation, the creative and critical contribution of the members in elaborating and implementing our policy are indispensable to progress.

In that domain, our party has made a great deal of progress, and it is all to the good. It will advance still further. It will do so by continuing to work to improve the organizational principle it has made its own: Democratic centralism.

Free and in-depth discussion; decisions by majority vote; implementation by all, which does not do away with the right to hold a different point of view--these great rules define the only organizational mode that answers the needs of a party leading the revolutionary combat and needing, to that end, an authentically democratic life. This is why it is the unique operational mode of the communist party.

Democratic centralism allows each communist to participate fully in the life of the party and its collective decisions, and allows the whole party to base the effectiveness of its action, as well as its faithfulness in carrying out the commitments it has made to our people, on a collective will. It creates the means for a many-sided and at the same time coherent understanding of reality, for thinking that is both personal and collective, leading to practical steps imbued with the experience of past struggles. We are especially attached to it because it is now more than ever essential to the development and implementation of our policy, and thus to the democratic march toward socialism.

This is why our total opposition to the system of organization into factions is quite natural. One need only look around to be convinced: Far from providing a richer exchange of ideas, factionalism hardens positions, reduces debate to confrontation, aligns the members behind leaders, and personalizes every problem. With this system, no collective elaboration of strategy is possible, nor even, in many cases, the elementary guarantees of internal democracy for the members, let alone any assurance that the public commitments made will not be renounced by intrigues at headquarters. The faction system is a caricature of democracy. It is the very opposite of what is appropriate for a revolutionary party such as ourselves.

No, in truth, our democratic life has nothing to fear from comparison or criticism. All the same, it is not locked into fixed forms. These forms are modified in accordance with changing conditions in the political struggle and changes in our strategy. It was in this spirit that the 23rd Congress made major modifications in our by-laws. Steps were taken to implement them in practice, both with respect to the role of the National Council and the discussion forum which preceded one of the meetings dealing with our activity among intellectuals.

We must continue along this path. It is the task of our leaders at every level--from the central committee to the cell bureau--to better translate this concern into the life of our organizations. It is also the responsibility of each communist. For while the democratic life of the party has the potential to fully develop in the framework of our procedural rules, its real richness comes from the irreplaceable contribution of the experiences and reflections, points of view and proposals of each of its members.

The cohesiveness of the party to which we are attached has nothing to do with monolithism. The idea that communists should renounce their differences in order to express themselves and act as one man is not at all like ours. Each person has come to the party with his own thinking, his own experience, his own understanding. All are increasingly confronted with major questions, the rapid succession of

unprecedented situations which arouse numerous reflections and discussions that are rich and impassioned. Far from fearing that diversity and vitality, we believe it is a great asset which we hope to see bear fruit. No more does unity mean uniformity than diversity means division.

The 700,000 men and women who make up the PCF now have more reason than ever to confirm the fundamental decision they made, and continue to make year after year, of being members of the revolutionary party of the working class.

To be a communist is to want to transform the world, liberate mankind. The present situation in France gives that will a new and immense field in which to act. If our party has almost always been in opposition over its long history, it is because up to now those who exploit and oppress them have almost always been in power. But the only reason it is so irreconcilably opposed to the powers of the past is so that it can be the architect of a better future.

Building the future: That is the task of today.

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MARCHAIS: ECONOMIC, DOMESTIC, FOREIGN POLICY PLANS

Paris L'HUMANITE in French 5 Dec 81 pp 5-7

[Report presented by Georges Marchais to PCF Central Committee: "Central Committee, 4 December 1981--Creating the Conditions for the Transformations Awaited by the Country and for the Rise in the PCF's Influence--Georges Marchais Has Shown that the Entire Party Should Be Imbued With the New Approach to Our Combat"]

[Excerpts] Dear comrades,

Our Party is now engaged in active preparation for the 24th Congress. In all the cells, the Communists are carrying on a broad and deep democratic debate, a debate of which there is no equivalent in the other political formations.

This debate indissolubly associates the most intensive possible reflection on the past and on the future with action for dealing with all our responsibilities under the present conditions.

It is to this latter question that the political bureau proposes to the Central Committee that today's meeting be devoted. This report and the discussion that will follow it therefore have a precise object: the implementation of the new policy, the tasks of the Party.

We Have Made an Unequivocal Choice

I shall first review, briefly, the conditions that we found ourselves in last spring.

These conditions were marked, as the draft resolution puts it, by a "paradox": on the one hand, a clear defeat of the right, in which our Party played its full part and which showed our people's aspiration to a new policy that would make it possible to solve the country's great problems; and on the other hand, election results for our Party that did not place us in the best conditions for acting.

We have measured the complexity of this situation. And we have made an unequivocal choice. Now as an essential part of the new majority, we have decided to place all our forces at the service of the workers and of the country in order to contribute, within the framework fixed by the universal suffrage, to achievement of the necessary transformations.

It is in this spirit, and noting, at the conclusion of the election campaign, that there were enough convergent positions between the Socialist Party and our Party for arriving at a common governmental orientation, that we reached the June agreement and accepted the proposal made to us to take a place within the government.

In thus acting, the Central Committee only carried out the mandate for which it was elected: implementing the policy democratically decided on by the 23rd Congress. I recall in this regard that the resolution adopted by the Congress specified, and I quote: "As a party of struggle, we are and we want to be, always more, a party of government. We are and we will always be ready to take on all our responsibilities in the service of the workers and of the people at all levels, including government. We are all the more desirous of participating in the management of the affairs of France in that without such participation, the workers will not obtain the changes that they need." And the report to the Congress added: as a party of struggle, the French Communist Party "is indissociably a party of government. In order to achieve the changes that they hope for, the workers need this party to participate in the government of the country. It is in their interest that Communist ministers should take a full part in management of the affairs of France as quickly as possible."

I add that it would have been all the more inconceivable to take any other decision in that during the presidential-election campaign, we constantly stressed, rightly, the injury that 34 years without Communist ministers represented for our people and our country.

II. The Party's Tasks

As I just mentioned, in this situation marked by a considerable raising of the stakes and of the class combat, our Party is aiming all its action in a single direction: contributing its best to the combat to overcome the obstacles erected by capital, to achieve all the transformations chosen by the French people. On all planes, at all levels, we are acting resolutely to achieve the objectives on the basis of which the majority and the government have been constituted.

The Rule of Action for the Communists Today

This is what the Communist ministers are doing, by working, as our proposed resolution indicates, "in unfailing solidarity in order to honor the commitments made jointly with the Socialist Party." In this regard, we make a positive evaluation of the work done since a little more than 5 months ago by the Communist ministers alongside their colleagues in government.

It is in this same spirit that the Communist deputies and senators are acting. We also think that our Parliamentary groups should be congratulated for their constructive, useful and effective contribution to the work of the new majority.

Finally, it is this same desire to contribute to solution of the problems posed to our people and our country that guides all the action of the Communist militants and elected representatives. Wherever they are to be found--in the enterprises, in the neighborhoods, in the villages--they are striving, in a spirit of openness, in a practical, concrete manner, to clarification of the situation and the outlooks, to revelation of all the new possibilities for improving things, to rallying all

those involved and getting them involved, and thus contributing to achieving all possible changes. Not so much to denounce as to explain; not so much to criticize as to propose; and not only to explain and propose, but also to construct, obtain, achieve, put into concrete form--this, in all areas, is the rule of action of the Communists today.

It is in this perspective that the Party is beginning to situate its action. I stress: it is beginning. It must indeed be recognized that this new way of thinking and acting does not develop spontaneously or without difficulties.

We Are All Learning Today

Here we touch upon one of the aspects of the new political practice that our proposed resolution calls on all Communists to adopt as their own. Its implementation requires effort. And this is true for two reasons, which it is indispensable for the Central Committee to discuss.

In the first place, one must be aware of the fact that the situation in which we are acting is a radically new one--unprecedented, I would say--for the Party. For the Communists, it is a matter of making a transition from a practice acquired in the course of long experience of absolute opposition to the government in power to that of a party in the government, as a full-fledged part of the majority in power.

Thus there is no reason for surprise, still less for taking fright, at the fact that hesitations, uncertainties, perhaps even blunders at times, may be noted here and there. We are in a period of apprenticeship. And because, as I said, the situation is new for everyone, we are all learning at present, from the cells to the Central Committee.

It is therefore necessary to make the effort, at all levels, to make the entire Party capable of taking on, in the best conditions, the high responsibilities that it has today: making the effort to understand, and making the effort to help others to understand; making an effort to show initiative and making an effort to help every Communist woman and man to implement our policy in a creative way.

This is a task to which the Central Committee must devote close attention.

The Weight of Our Combat in Recent Years

But there is doubtlessly a second reason that can explain why the implementation of the Party's new political practice does not take place automatically by itself. Perhaps the idea exists, more or less clearly formulated, that our participation in the government is purely circumstantial and--let us put it clearly--that it basically demonstrates an opportunist attitude.

It is, after all, understandable that this question could be raised. The policy of the government in which we are participating does not correspond in all points to what we continue to consider necessary. In the last analysis, it is only a step from that fact to fearing that our Party is serving as an endorsement for a policy of class collaboration.

But those who would take that step would not be right. They would be seriously deceived.

It is quite true that the political change has not come about with the relationship of forces that we had hoped for. But it is also quite obvious that the popular movement that made possible the victory of 10 May is the bearer of ideas, of aspirations for which we have fought throughout recent years. And today, we find in the action of the government and of the majority a good many of the measures that we have helped to work out, to make known and win approval for.

I will cite a few examples.

As early as 1977, we showed that the primary question for attacking the problem of unemployment effectively is revival of national production, reconquest of the domestic market and the creation of new industrial jobs. Today, these great objectives are at the heart of the government's industrial policy. Possibilities are emerging for coal. The need to revive consumption in order to broaden domestic outlets is recognized. Finally, last Wednesday the Council of Ministers adopted several measures in favor of wood, textiles-clothing and toys, and decided on the broad outlines of a machine-tool development program. We are all the more pleased about this because we cannot help recalling the derision accorded not long ago to our proposals aimed at "producing French."

Finally, prospects have opened up for reducing the work week, limiting temporary and dangerous work, lowering the retirement age, extending the rights of men and women workers--all measures that show that the constructive action we have carried out in recent years is bearing its fruits.

Our Strategy of Democratic Advance toward Socialism

More generally, the victory of 10 May is the doing of millions and millions of working men and women, of young people who, if they do not yet have sufficiently clear awareness of the causes of the crisis as well as of the level of the transformations necessary to get out of it, nonetheless express a fundamental requirement: to see things changed, for themselves and for the country.

And we are indeed with them, to help them to fulfill that great hope. And because, as the proposed resolution explains, in view of the depth of the crisis, "each step forward in that direction becomes the stakes of a true class confrontation," we are with them in order to carry out this class combat in the new conditions, in order to achieve concrete results and clarify through these actions the nature of the obstacles that they run up against and of the means to be employed so as to overcome them.

It is by thus making "the realities and awareness go forward," at the fastest pace possible and within the framework set by the French people themselves, that we shall push capital back, that we shall seize new victories for the workers, that we shall win new forces over, that we shall thus help to modify gradually the relationship of the social and political forces. This is our entire strategy of democratic advance toward socialism. As one sees, there is nothing about this that constitutes a social-democratic management of the crisis. The fact is even quite the opposite.

Some New Possibilities

In these conditions, our line is clear: we must advance boldly along the way to which we have begun to commit ourselves. We must adopt the same rule of conduct

in all areas: that which consists in taking advantage of all the new means that arise for carrying out the necessary transformations as far as possible and for contributing as best we can to the advance of awareness.

Let us, indeed, understand this clearly: a good many positive measures decided on by the government and the majority are nothing but new possibilities that will be exploited only if those concerned make them their business. If such be the case, several measures, already decided on as of today, can lead to advances, to considerable progress, the extent of which is, to be sure, not always appreciated. But on the other hand, when a wait-and-see attitude carries the day, it is to be feared that the official orientations, as correct as they might be, will remain a dead letter.

The role of the Communists is therefore--in all areas, and case by case--to help those concerned to make use, in the proper way, of each new means for solving their problems.

I have also pointed out several of the new means offered to the popular movement for winning that other decisive battle: that of employment. I shall simply list these means: the commission for monitoring enterprises that are in trouble; the "employment-solidarity" contracts, the local job committees, the government's opposition to temporary work.

Finally, I dealt, in the same context, with the problem of occupational training.

I add that L'HUMANITE of 26 November published a declaration by the Political Bureau calling on the Communists to participate in a concrete and specific manner in the process of decentralization.

An Immense Popular Swell for Peace

The same constructive spirit, the same desire to gather everyone concerned to achieve results, animates us in the international sphere.

The aggressive and dangerous policy of the American administration, its desire to start again a mad escalation of the arms race, as expressed notably by the NATO decision to install new nuclear missiles in Europe and by the production of the neutron bomb, is being given trouble by an immense popular movement.

It can be said without exaggeration that a veritable mass uprising by international public opinion is involved. Very broad popular forces are demanding that a ruinous and dangerous arms race be halted, that steps be taken toward armaments reduction, toward disarmament, to free the resources for social progress and the fight against underdevelopment and hunger.

This is something such as had never been seen in Europe, even 30 years ago at the time of the Stockholm Appeal. So many demonstrators, with hundreds of thousands participating, had never been seen. One had never seen so many women and men committed, especially young people, coming from such varied backgrounds, so many leaders, elected officials and political forces--Communists, Socialists and Social-Democrats, Liberals--so many religious authorities, high-ranking military persons, cultural personalities, militant ecologists. One had never seen all of the trade-

union organizations of all of Europe unanimously asking the governments to take urgent measures for controlled and balanced disarmament.

In France, with the 25 October demonstration, and the actions that prepared for it on the initiative of the Peace Movement, our people, in unison with the other peoples of Europe, took their place in this fight that fully concerns them.

This immense swell has become a major political fact that no one can ignore any longer.

The Movement Is Beginning to Bear Its Fruits

Washington's leaders have had to feel its weight as they take the measure of the indignation aroused by their declarations about "a limited nuclear war," limited to Europe. They have weighed the risk of finding themselves totally isolated. And at present, the popular movement for peace is beginning to bear its fruits.

This week has seen the opening, in Geneva, of the negotiations between the United States and the Soviet Union on medium-range nuclear weapons. This is an important event. Reagan has had to declare that Leonid Brezhnev's proposals, aimed at achieving substantial reductions involving hundreds of Eurostrategic weapons, constitute a serious basis for negotiations.

Naturally, all is far from being settled. The American administration does indeed intend to go on in the same way seeking military supremacy. That is why the intervention of public opinion must become even broader: we see the part it has played in the holding of these negotiations, since everything had been done to counter them, even the principle of dialogue being disputed. The voice of the states and of the peoples should make itself heard ever more strongly in order to enable the Geneva negotiations to produce effective results without delay.

As we state in the 23 June agreement reached between our Party and the Socialist Party, "France, with respect for its alliances," should act "for peace, progressive disarmament aimed at simultaneous dissolution of the military blocs, while ensuring the equilibrium of the forces in Europe and in the world and the security of each country." In this spirit, while "international negotiation on the limitation and reduction of armaments in Europe" is opened, as called for by our two parties, everything should be done for the negotiations to produce a halt to the nuclear escalation and balanced reduction of medium-range nuclear weaponry, American and Soviet.

The Communists' Action for Peace

The French Communist Party, for its part, intends to develop its campaign of information, sensitization and action in favor of peace and disarmament. It is resolved to strengthen its contribution to the Peace Movement's unitary initiative that is the sequel to the national rally of 25 October.

The Paris Appeal, adopted by the 100,000 participants, sets out themes of action that are realistic and acceptable to all those who have peace at heart. While the opening of the Geneva negotiations underlines the strong immediacy of the Paris Appeal, its approval by millions of French women and men cannot fail to have a heavy influence.

In order for this to happen, it is obvious that alongside the Peace Movement, alongside the many different organizations that already support the Appeal-- particularly the CGT, which has called on its members to ratify it massively in the enterprises--the Party must contribute its full part.

In this regard, in view of the importance of the problems posed, it is understandable and it is right that the Communists attach special attention to the development and radiation of the Peace Movement, which is uniting around this great human cause so many men and women of all opinions, of all beliefs, of all sensibilities. The Communists, respectful of the Movement's own characteristics, sincerely intend to act within it so as to contribute to its creation in places where it does not exist, to its vitality, to its expansion.

As we are engaged in preparation for the 24th Congress, putting the struggle for peace in its proper place in our strategy, how can each Party organization, each Communist, fail to give their full support, with boldness, spirit of openness and initiative, to what is both a class combat, a national combat and a human combat?

Making Our View of Socialism for France Known and Winning Approval for It

Naturally, we do not separate these struggles from the view that we hold: democratic, self-managing socialism, socialism for France; quite to the contrary--as all of the proposed resolution tends to show, this outlook constitutes the fundamental response to the aspirations and needs of the people and of the country as expressed, in the conditions that we are aware of, by the vote of 10 May.

The great objectives of socialist transformation that we propose--a new type of society and of life for people, a new type of development and of democracy for the nation, a new role for France in the world--are not off in the distant future or to be achieved at the end of intermediate stages: they are the concrete response to the concrete problems posed to our country today.

Like it or not, it is these great transformational objectives that lie at the heart of the political combat in France. That is why the Communists are striving to make them known and win approval for them, to rally and act for democratic, self-managing socialism. They are doing so in the conviction that each new conquest, each new right seized by the action of the popular movement constitutes progress in the direction of modification of the relationship of forces, a step forward in France's march to socialism. Such is our strategy of democratic advance to socialism, for which the entire report of the Central Committee session is intended as an implementation in today's conditions.

Developing Our Efforts in Favor of National Solidarity

Nor do we separate our daily action for social progress, democracy and peace from the necessary development of our efforts in favor of international solidarity with all the revolutionary and progressive forces in the world.

This is one of our Party's noblest traditions, forged through innumerable battles that mark our history, alongside the oppressed, the persecuted, all the peoples who struggle for justice and liberty, for a better world. The Communists of today are only the heirs of this revolutionary and humanist tradition bequeathed to us by several generations of militants, and they should more than ever be the ones to continue it.

This also represents a great political question of our time. In our day we are living through a profound change in the human race. The recent decades have now gone into history as a key period in the evolution of humanity--an epoch marked by the irresistible upsurge of hundreds and hundreds of millions of human beings in Asia, Africa, Latin America, resolved to break their chains and pave for themselves, at the cost of immense sacrifices, the difficult way toward a better world; an epoch in which the eternally oppressed of yesterday are no longer agreeing to bend to the law of the richest and the strongest; the epoch of revolutions.

Naturally, this new world can be born and grow only through innumerable difficulties, tentative efforts, trial and error, sometimes even terrible convulsions. Obviously, we will never be the unconditional supporters of just anyone. But we will always be unconditional supporters of the peoples' great movement forward against the intolerable scourges of hunger, underdevelopment, oppression in all its forms.

It is all the more necessary in our era that imperialism should have a hard time accepting the successive defeats inflicted on it by those who were its slaves yesterday. Against these peoples and against all those who are tempted to follow the same path, it is multiplying its pressures, brandishing threats, practicing blackmail, organizing provocation. This adventurous and criminal policy commands the active forces of our country, and the Communists in the first place, to express even more loudly and strongly their solidarity with all the peoples who are freeing themselves and working toward a new world order, and especially with all those--from Cuba to Nicaragua, from Palestine to the Western Sahara, from southern Africa to Southeast Asia--who today find themselves the most direct targets of imperialism's aggressiveness.

As the proposed resolution states: "This is an irreplaceable component of the class combat being waged at the world level."

The Communist Party Is in Good Health

To conclude, I would like to look at the balance-sheet of the Party's health. Contrary to what is asserted by those who do not wish us well, we note that the Party's health is good. Several indexes furnish indisputable proof of this.

In the first place, I want to note the effort being made for in-depth preparation for the 24th Congress. In depth: that is, at the cell level, to start with. Never before have we counted so many cell meetings with discussion of a proposed Congress resolution on their agenda. This overall improvement should not, however, mask the inequalities to be noted here and there; on the contrary, it should move us to correct them.

Secondly, we can now estimate, at this point in the year, that at the end of 1981 our membership will be larger than last year, when, as I recall, it was 709,000 members. The rate of new memberships is good: we had 84,000 new memberships at mid-November, and we can predict that the number of new memberships at the end of this year will be higher than the figure at the end of last year.

Nevertheless, there is still a battle for us to win during December: issuance of their cards to the 30,000 Communists who still do not have them. Everyone will understand that beyond the arithmetical aspect, an important political question is posed.

I add that one-third of our federations--and among them, a good many of the biggest ones--have reached or exceeded their membership of last year. As for the others, many of them have, as of this date, nearly regained their strength of last year. Here too, I note that this overall picture should not mask the unevenness or lags occurring here and there.

A few words about the cantonal elections. The date for them is now set. Although they involve only a part of the country and are for the election of local representatives, they will constitute the first election of national importance since last Spring's political changeover. Their results will therefore be followed closely, and they should be prepared for carefully, in the first place by bringing the nomination of candidates to a quick end.

We shall return later to the orientations of the election campaign.

I would simply like to add in this regard that the proposed redistricting of a certain number of cantons will soon be decided on. It is desirable for the definitive propositions to be based on the most objective foundations. In this regard, the discussions that have taken place in the local assemblies have shown that certain problems remain.

Such, comrades, are the ideas that I was charged, in the name of the Political Bureau, to present to you.

At this time, we should deepen our thinking together and imbue the entire Party with this new approach to our combat, in today's conditions.

The task is not an easy one, to be sure. But such, we are convinced, is the way to follow in order to create the conditions for the transformations awaited by the country and for the rise of our Party's influence.

11267

CSO: 3100/170

LEROY ON DRAFT RESOLUTION

Paris HUMANITE DIMANCHE in French 16 Dec 81 pp 3, 4

[Interview with Roland Leroy Politburo member and editor of L'HUMANITE, by Andre Carrel, "Leroy on Draft Resolution"; date and place not given]

[Excerpts] [Question] The draft resolution for the 24th Congress of the PCF was published in L'HUMANITE last Tuesday. It will consist of studies by every communist and by a large number of noncommunist readers as well. How did the Central Committee of the PCF go about preparing this draft resolution and adopting it unanimously?

[Answer] The document is the fruit of the collective work of the Central Committee itself. Last June the Central Committee heard, discussed and adopted a report presented by Georges Marchais. We published that report in L'HUMANITE, and since that time discussions based on that report have been held in every party organization.

Since then our thought and action have been nourished by the interview Georges Marchais gave in July to HUMANITE DIMANCHE, the Festival of Mankind, the actions of our elected officials, our press, other documents, and other party activities.

The Central Committee in June had named a committee to undertake a preliminary analysis over the summer months. In mid-September the Central Committee met again to review progress on the document, and there was extensive discussion. But this text is not just intended to be "studied." It is destined to be discussed, widely, freely, by all communists. The discussion can be followed simply by reading L'HUMANITE, which starting 9 November will published a discussion forum on it every day.

No other party in France makes such democratic preparations for its national conventions.

[Question] Can you give us now the major focal points of the document?

[Answer] One word of caution is necessary, before I begin. What I am going to say today is not a contribution to the discussion, and in any case cannot take the place of each party militant's personal reading and study of the document itself, which should also be done by every worker interested in the party.

[Question] Yes, but it could inspire people to read it...to understand it....

[Answer] Yes. If our talk today could inspire the 700,000 communists and hundreds of thousands of other workers with the desire to read and study it, it will have served its purpose.

[Question] Indeed, the main themes appear in the summary of the document itself.

[Answer] Indeed, after a brief introduction, the draft resolution is divided into three major sections.

The first reviews the lessons of recent decades to analyze the characteristics of the new historical era and describe the way the PCF has responded to them.

The second part, as its title indicates, is devoted to French socialism. It restates our opinion for our country: democratic and self-managing socialism. And it puts this option, covering both aim and means, in the context of the unique features of our nation, the crisis, and current international realities.

Then, that part proceeds to analyse our current policy.

Finally, the third part is devoted--I was on the point of saying, the document as a whole is also devoted--to the activity of the PCF itself, with particular emphasis on new features of this action; the necessity of mass activity in the most diverse forms, the encouragement of creative initiative through elevation of the political and ideological level, both by adding to its ranks--particularly in business and industry--and by greater democratization within the party itself.

[Question] I would like to go back to the first part. And in particular to the "delay of 1956," already noted by the 23rd Congress, and ultimately given great emphasis in the draft resolution. What is really behind this notion of "delay"? Is it that it was necessary to go all the way back to 1956 to explain the historical period we are now living through? And how does all that fit in with the change in our strategy which has led to a serious defeat for the party in the legislative elections, at the same time as it has led to an unprecedented development in French political history: the defeat of Giscard d'Estaing, the election of F. Mitterrand, a Leftist victory in the legislative elections and the participation of Communist ministers in a government for the first time in a third of a century?

[Answer] There is nothing hidden behind the notion of delay, nothing that is not said in the document itself.

Our actions during the elections and over the last few years can only be correctly analyzed by deep reflection on the history of recent decades. We believe that the PCF's thinking, its creativity, the lively definition of its strategy, have all been behind the times. We were led to this conclusion after analyzing the various changes that have come about in French society since the 1950's in a world which itself is undergoing change.

In 1956, the 20th Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union [CPSU] revived this idea and engendered critical thinking throughout the communist movement on the question of diverse national roads to socialism.

At various stages in our history, we have invoked the principles that Lenin had already enunciated, namely that different countries would approach the building of socialism by different roads, and would build in different ways. For example, in 1946, Maurice Thorez, in an interview with the TIMES...

[Question] I remember very well! That made quite a stir at the time.

[Answer] I am also thinking of the 1966 meeting of the Central Committee of Argenteuil, and of the further advance represented by the "Champigny Manifesto" of December 1968, and still later Georges Marchais's "Democratic Challenge" of 1973.

But when we re-examine the PCF's actions, we can certainly see that we have not adequately reflected the depth of the changes and mutations that have occurred in social life, in political and economic life, and even in institutional life, and one can see that we clung to statements of principles rather than moving ahead with the fecund development of our own policy. In short, the party delayed too long before beginning to explore different roads to socialism, the kinds of forms suitable to the France of today. And it has had its cost: in 1968, for one example. For another, when the common governmental program fed illusions, and understated the critical importance of the intervention of the masses.

Naturally, this delay does not mean that we were standing on the sidelines of history. Those years were anything but lost, but they mortgaged the future. We have gone through the changes of the 1960's and 1970's mindful of the need to understand them but without fully mastering them. Our thinking, even the thinking of our best people, was hostage to a longstanding dream, and thus remained in part inoperative, because it was not integrated into a coherent strategy which would give it the requisite scope.

Thus, we failed to make the workers and the masses understand the necessity of setting higher goals in trying to respond to the problems posed by the current crisis. Consequently, we did not get the masses themselves involved in the unfolding of the political drama. So the workers in 1977 were unable to prevent the Socialist Party [PS] from renouncing the Common Program and the objectives that had been agreed upon.

[Question] In fact, on the subject of 1977, the draft says that the party was right, and I quote, "not to capitulate."

[Answer] Yes, quite so. The Common Program was created in 1972 to last 5 years, the duration of one legislature. It was to become a reality in 1977. This was what we proposed, solely out of a desire to preserve its orientation and basic provisions without radicalizing it further, and in hopes of achieving a Leftist victory in the March 1978 elections. The problems that appeared in 1977 came from the PS' decision to obtain a more favorable balance of forces that would leave its own hands free by weakening our party, either by making us capitulate or by provoking a break and abandoning the Common Program. We were right to undertake a campaign to explain and clarify what had happened; it was unpleasant, of course, but it was indispensable at a time when hostility to change and the persistence of illusions led people to take as petty squabbling our discussions about the most fundamental questions relating to surmounting the crisis. If we had not done so, the situation today would probably be infinitely more difficult. Far from preserving the influence of the party, that would have compromised its decisive character.

So, there remains the outcome of the 1981 elections. I think it is an exaggeration to say that we suffered an "electoral defeat." The truth is more dialectically complex: we suffered a serious reverse and, at the same time, we saw our ideas advancing...to such a point that we are now participating in the implementation of a new policy, with four Communist ministers, with the implementation of proposals we have been advancing for a long time.

[Question] Let us assume that explains the delay. But I note that in the document emphasis is put on the fact that in France, a developed capitalist country, capitalism has reached its historical limits. So the question is now: if capitalism has reached its historical limits, we are heading toward socialism.

[Answer] First, I think it would be useful to talk about the special importance of the most recent PCF Congresses: the 22nd and 23rd.

With the 22nd Congress we took a decisive step by abandoning, as far as France was concerned, the notion of the dictatorship of the proletariat. We liberated our strategic initiative from the Third International concept of a model socialism. This also to some degree freed the party's thinking and strategic creativity. The cumulative thinking done in the preceding period was thus brought face to face with the new realities of France, and this made it possible for the 23rd Congress to take a still bigger step in the definition of a party strategy conceived as the autonomous development of the party's policy.

The lessons of the failure of the Common Program, which came during this same time, supplemented, deepened and enriched the historic importance of the 22nd Congress. We are now, today, in a situation in which that strategy can finally see its full development.

[Question] So, on that note, let us go to the second part of the document.

[Answer] The second part describes the option we espouse for France.

Looking at the changes in our society and the developing crisis, we do in fact believe that capitalism has now reached its historical limits. And that the question of socialism is thus the great issue of our time.

An issue of our time requires solutions for our time. This is what we did in the 22nd and 23rd Congresses. And this is what we are preparing to do, in an even more elaborate way than before, in the 24th Congress. The kind of socialism that corresponds to life and society as people in France experience them today is a democratic, self-managing socialism, which will mobilize the means for a new development of the nation, of democracy, and which will make it possible for France to play a completely new role in the world.

We will not arrive at such a society "overnight" as a result of insurrection or elections! It will come as the result of a societal process of revolutionary development. This is what we call the democratic road to socialism.

This is not the application to today's society of models that were fruitful in the past.

It is something quite different. What is needed is to mobilize a mass, many-faceted coalition of the majority, a coalition that will assume many different forms, which will mobilize in different ways, and which will meet the forces of change in different ways.

This mass coalition is not a coalition put together on a programmatic basis established "from above;" rather it would consist of a number of specific, limited accords, such for example as the accord concluded between the PS and the PCF in June.

This would not be a passive coalition. It would be a coalition for struggle.

For there to be coalition and struggle, there must be revolutionary party activity. In other words the process of the democratic road to socialism has three elements: the mass coalition, the struggle, and the existence and expansion of the activity of the PCF.

In this part of the draft resolution, we show that our option (democratic and self-managing socialism, achieved by democratic means) is far from an abstract one, and is rather one based on reality.

The nation's individuality, which is made up of our history, its lessons, its contradictions, forcibly poses unique problems at the same time as it provides the means for resolving them.

We are also bearing in mind the current realities of society and the crisis; and the contradictory nature of the crisis, which we have long been analyzing, and which has both positive and negative consequences (not juxtaposed, but in some way intermingled). For example, the growing aspiration for change and the difficulty of clearly ascertaining the nature of that change.

This leads us--in order to respond to the needs of the French people--to a new type of society and life for man, a new type of development and democracy for the nation.

Finally, I will say something about France's new role in the world.

[Question] Precisely on this point about the role of France in the world, there is a question which often resurfaces in discussions: is it really possible to envisage a French-style socialism (as we called it in the 22nd Congress), and thus the establishment of socialism, in an advanced capitalist country like our own, in an international environment such as we have today?

[Answer] Yes, precisely because the international environment is as it is. In other words, the international balance of power favors the forces of socialism, democracy and peace.

We are not talking about a dogmatic, Manichean view of a world divided into two parts which have nothing to do with one another: the reality is a living, dialectic one. The international balance of power, along with socialism today, the labor movement in the capitalist countries and the national liberation movement, is creating conditions for weakening imperialism, and increasingly supports the potential for new paths to social transformation throughout the world in the most diverse ways. In that regard, the text adopted by the Central Committee reaffirms the validity of the analysis made by the 23rd Congress of socialism as it exists today, and notes with satisfaction the successes achieved by the socialist countries, as well as the existence of differences, and even divergences, between our party and other communist parties, even over such major questions as the relationship between democracy and socialism. In fact it is precisely these new conditions which open up possibilities for international ties that are as strong as any in the past (I will even go so far as to say stronger than in the past!), based on independence, diversity and mutual respect.

Under these conditions, the international environment, far from working against the possibility of a democratic approach to self-managing socialism in France, supports it. We are convinced of this.

We also, in this part of the draft resolution, analyze the current political situation...

[Question] This is precisely the question I was going to ask you: what needs to be done now?

[Answer] This is the question behind every single one of our issues of HUMANITE DIMANCHE (this week as every other): we are participating in the government and determined to make it a success; we are also determined to stay in it and work to carry out the commitments that have been made. We are in it in order to carry out a policy in the interests of the workers.

To those who pose the question, "How far along are we?": basically we are fully engaged in implementing the policy defined by the 22nd and 23rd party congresses: we are at a point where, step by step, new advances can be made, which will provide fresh support for further steps forward, for more progress.

In other words, we are engaged in a process which, far from being a surprise to us or contradicting the strategy which came out of the 22nd and 23rd Congresses, sustains and validates it.

[Question] We must now of course deal with the conclusion of the document: in this historical period, what is the right position for the PCF to take? What position should it take, what actions should it take, both with respect to the masses and also internally, from the simple standpoint of the need to restore its influence?

[Answer] The PCF's internal activity has no other aim than to make it more effective and facilitate its external activity. Its external activity has very clear aims: we want to help change conditions and in order to do that we want to support the raising of the level of awareness of the workers and of all those who want a new society in France.

This means that the party, in such circumstances, must act less than ever as a sect cut off from the masses; on the contrary it should work on behalf of the interests and needs of all those who work for a living, of all those who are victimized by the crisis. This is the basis for a broader concept of union in actions to transform society.

This leads to several important directives, which the Central Committee articulated.

For example, more sustained attention must be paid to the activities of interest groups, especially organized labor actions in our country.

We must also intensify the dissemination of our ideas and proposals; in other words our propaganda must be more active and broader. And here the document highlights the importance of the printed and electronic media, of militant support for L'HUMANITE, for HUMANITE DIMANCHE and for the whole communist press.

The workers of France need a stronger communist party. We are thus working to bring about a resurgence of our influence.

Without going into details, I would like to lay special stress on one point that is mentioned in the document adopted by the Central Committee. This is the necessity of greatly strengthening the party's organization and level of activity in business and industry. This is obviously going to be a critical factor in changing society.

A stronger party obviously means a party with more members; a party which can assure the full flowering of democratic life.

9516

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LAURENT, HERZOG ON PCF POLICIES, STATUS

Paris REVOLUTION in French 13 Nov 81 pp 14-17

[Interview with Paul Laurent, PCF Central Committee secretary, and Philippe Herzog, Politburo member, by Desire Calderon; date and place not specified]

[Text] From the aftermath of the 22d congress to the presidential election of 1981, the PCF's path has often been misunderstood. A setback. And yet, for the first time in 34 years, Communist ministers are in the government. Is this a paradox? What has happened?

[Question] It is said that the Communist Party talks about 1956 in order to ignore the years from 1977 to 1981--to extricate itself from last spring's electoral setback and blame it on others.

Paul Laurent: That is said by those who are sorry we did not approach that period the way they wanted us to. But let us talk about it. Those were transitional years--years in which our party became aware of how far behind it had fallen in working out a necessary strategy for the advance to socialism. At its 22d and 23rd congresses, it defined that new strategy and began to implement it. It is true that what we were proposing involved so many new implications that there was a contradiction with the attitudes and ways of political behavior long entrenched in the people's consciousness. All the more since those attitudes and ways of behavior were also shaped by the very activity of our party during the preceding period. It is very true that the implementation of that new strategy ran into difficulties, including difficulties in our relations with those who trusted us--or at least some of them. There are probably two explanations for that: either what we did at the time was not correct or else those new ideas needed time to gain ground. The latter interpretation is the one adopted in the draft resolution for the 24th congress and the one confirmed by reality.

[Question] The Communists have encountered difficulties, but it is said that they are the ones who created those difficulties.

Philippe Herzog: At the 22d and 23rd congresses, we defined and began to implement a strategy corresponding closely to the problems present in our society--a strategy capable of creating the conditions for a people's movement that will permit the necessary transformations for getting out of the crisis. But we were moving counter

to the political behavior shaped by the preceding period and the Common Program: the belief in a single model for socialism, the wait for the "great election night," delegation of power, and the priority given to a top-level agreement on a program, all to the detriment of any taking of responsibility to advance the necessary means and solutions for getting out of the crisis. Having failed to present a political perspective for society soon enough, we were regarded primarily as an opposition party. The Common Program did not radically change that, and it worked against us. Our slowness in coming to grips directly with the institutions--notably the presidential election, in which the highest level of government power is at stake--had the same shortcomings. Fortunately, we have grappled thoroughly with those problems since 1976. The results of our action are twofold. First, we have made some progress: ideas have emerged and we have achieved very important results--for example, the possibility of reaching a constructive political agreement with the Socialist Party and the possibility of achieving some specific early successes today in the interests of the workers. But second, we have not been able to solve all the basic problems inherited from the previous period.

So there have been confirmed advances and difficulties during these years from 1977 to 1981. That contradictory character remains in 1981, with the party's electoral setback on the one hand and the pressure exerted by the idea and credibility of change, understood in a heterogeneous manner but shaped in large part by our influence, on the other. It is that situation which was registered by the defeat of the right and the entrance of Communist ministers into the government.

The result of the presidential election confirms that many of those hoping for change are not simply afraid that we wanted to do too much, but that they are often unaware of our original choices and our real solutions to the crisis. They still do not trust us. They still have the idea that our objective is a model of society that does not correspond to the reality, traditions, and even history of France: the idea of the dictatorship of the proletariat. What we still have to put across is simple awareness that the Communists have new and sound ideas for full employment, the new growth of France, and a new life and civilization. There is little knowledge and even less evaluation of the scope, here and now, of our proposals for producing and working in a different manner, creating a new international order, challenging the choices made by capital, and so on.

Paul Laurent: In short, our party's Central Committee rejects the idea that we conducted ourselves quite well before 1976-1977, but that we then botched everything beginning with the break with the Socialist Party. The fact is that there was a long period in which we did not break loose from a historical lag. We began to do so in difficult conditions starting in 1977, and with the disadvantages resulting from our late start.

[Question] Let us talk precisely about the year 1977. That was the year when the Common Program was updated. Before that, in 1976, there was the 22d congress, which laid the groundwork for the new path. But the situation was a little contradictory: it was at the moment when the limitations, let us say, of the Common Program's orientations were being better understood that the Communist Party, in fighting to update the program, seems to have centered the debate even more closely on that program by seeking to have it updated.

Philippe Herzog: When we defined a new strategic orientation in 1976, the 22d congress had gone only part of the way. In addition, the Common Program existed, and we very rightly did everything possible to put it across. But the program was concealing the scope of our strategic choice, operating as a substitute for the prospect of a French-style socialism, and continuing to act as a screen. It was a screen concealing the need to struggle for the necessary means for getting out of the crisis. It concealed the need for intervention by the workers themselves and the transforming content of their struggles. The measures it advocated then seemed to have been won once and for all and thus became secondary in the debate. It was identified with a union that was to be the solution itself and with a sort of electoral cartel, and thus all we had to do was wait for victory. When the Socialist Party abandoned the Common Program because it wanted its hands free to pursue a different policy and considered the relationship of forces between it and us inadequate, we on the contrary defended the Common Program and its transforming content. But we were not able to mobilize the workers in its defense. In updating it, we were not engaging in maximalism. Our main concern was to strengthen the effectiveness of a text from 1972, since a lot of water had run under the bridge of crisis since that year. At the same time, we also took important steps at the end of 1977 to show more clearly the need for intervention by the workers, decentralization, and the self-management process. But people's minds were elsewhere. That effect of the Common Program survived in people's thinking even beyond 1978 with the idea that victory by the left is sufficient in itself. That contributed to our party's electoral setback in 1981, as did the fact that we were misunderstood on the question of means. Our effort to turn the class content of transformations, struggle, and intervention by the workers into general issues was misinterpreted as being a matter of one-upmanship. Today, one can begin to understand that every real step in the direction of progress runs into class obstacles and that basic reforms are really necessary in order to get out of the crisis.

[Question] Could not those difficulties have been avoided if the party, for example, had said: "We still support implementation of the Common Program, but if the updating fails, it is not very serious in the long run because parallel with it, we have a new path for change that we have just drawn up at the 22d congress"?

Paul Laurent: We forcefully stressed the historic character of the 22d congress and did everything possible to popularize it. But it involved intervention by the workers themselves--the link between their struggles and the high level of the necessary solutions--and all of that was ineffective with public opinion (we were accused of turning back) because it was contradicted by the ways of behavior shaped by the Common Program. In a way, the new path opened up at the 22d congress was not--to use your expression--parallel; it collided with the Common Program. But it was impossible, and would have been extremely dangerous for the future, to say that if the updating failed, it would not be serious. No, saying that is what would have been very serious. The question that presented itself--Common Program or no Common Program?--concerned the high level of the necessary measures for getting out of the crisis, resolving the country's basic problems, and undertaking change. Something essential is at stake. Today we see very clearly how the rightwing and the forces of money are reacting to the reforms. In 1977-1978, there was such a will for change at any price that we refused to see the problems posed by the question of the means of change. With the support of an unrestrained anticommunist campaign, that issue, which we were forcefully and rightfully presenting, has often appeared restrictive and polemical.

Capitulation in 1977 on the question of abolishing the transforming content of the Common Program would have meant increasing illusions as to the possibility of solving the problems facing the country without the indispensable basic reforms needed to bring the country out of the crisis. Capitulation by the revolutionary party would have meant encumbering the future, increasing confusion and discouragement, and allowing the people's movement to fall into great disillusionment later. It would have meant hampering the possibilities for change even today.

Philippe Herzog: We recall the issue of nationalization, for example. The Socialist Party's stands in 1977 would have allowed subsidiaries to escape nationalization, and that would have jeopardized the very effectiveness of those nationalizations. When we struggled to have the subsidiaries included, we were accused of maximalism. Looking at the PARIBAS case today, it can be seen that the problem we brought up was real. The prime minister has severely criticized Mr Moussa's maneuvering.

The issues posed in 1977 and since then have been concerned not only with the subsidiaries, but also with the nationalization of the steel industry, the struggle against deindustrialization, the production of nuclear energy, the effective defense of purchasing power, and the upgrading of low wages--all issues on which our persevering action has not been without influence, since they have been transformed into specific commitments and have now been reflected in government action. You can see the service we have rendered to the workers and the country--and incidentally, nothing will be achieved without continuing in that same path. We were right to defend the transforming content of the Common Program and then to continue enlightening the masses concerning the ways and means of reaching real solutions to the crisis, thus preserving the possibilities for real change. And that is why we have been subjected to a frantic anticommunist campaign by the Giscard-controlled media and the press, which incidentally are continuing today to criticize, if not oppose, the paths to change and even the government.

If we had capitulated in 1977, we would have been renouncing in advance the possibility of real progress for our country and the struggle for that progress. No other alternative was possible: it was either struggle for parity or capitulate. It must be remembered that the Socialist leaders excluded the possibility of a limited agreement that would have noted both convergent and divergent viewpoints.

[Question] If you were not able to sign in 1977, why did you do so in 1981 on the basis of an agreement that includes far fewer measures than the list in the Common Program? What happened?

Paul Laurent: But today we are dealing with an entirely different type of agreement, one that does not tie the people's movement down to a finishing line that is already designated and defined, stroke by stroke and measure by measure. On the contrary, it corresponds to the real state of the movement, gives no illusions about the possibility of eliminating people's intervention, and leaves open every possibility for progress. As far as the Communist Party is concerned--and it is thoroughly committed to the agreement, of course--the agreement leaves intact its original action and the idea of constantly necessary struggle during the very course of change so as to succeed with it, and it preserves the possibility of a development of people's awareness concerning the need for thorough reforms to bring the country out of the crisis and to advance. It is true that the influence of those ideas can be measured by our

party's weak showing in the election. But the fact remains that it is the struggle led by our party--the implementation of its new strategy--that insures the presence and strength of those ideas in the movement today. That is what we have done since 1977, and particularly in 1981 with the campaign by Georges Marchais, who played an essential role. It is those achievements in the people's movement which give the current situation its chances for a favorable outcome.

Philippe Herzog: Effective work to succeed with commitments made on the basis of converging viewpoints--that is, without allowing our differences to constitute an insurmountable obstacle--was not possible 4 years ago. It was Communist action which saved the possibility of constructive action in cooperation with the government. Without these past 4 years of struggle against the Giscard-Ceyrac-Barre policy, against the old ruts, and for new and consistent choices and means, France's future would be obstructed and we could not have attained the possibilities open to us today. I also want to emphasize the value and realism of the 131 proposals made by our candidate for president of the republic. They must certainly be our goal in order to get out of the crisis. Of course, that plan for struggle did not win out in the elections. But its ideas count in French political life. To progress today, the item on the agenda is that of placing employment at the center of the new policy, stimulating consumption, and making new growth possible. And against that there is the obstacle of capital: we must push back its positions, its ideas, and its choices in economic management.

Let us also take the example of the nationalizations. We are sticking to our position: other nationalizations will be necessary in addition to those already decided on if we are to get out of the crisis permanently. But the current decisions do represent real progress and an important change. In terms of the 1977 conflict, it can be seen that things have evolved: the steel industry has now been nationalized. MATRA [Mechanics, Aviation, and Traction Company] and the subsidiaries, even though they are not 100-percent controlled by the government, will not escape the nationalization of industrial groups and will be under democratic management with a tripartite board of directors--none of that had been achieved 4 years ago. I have already mentioned the nuclear power industry. That battle has been won, but between 1977 and 1981, that essential national asset was in question. They used to attack the Communists, who have the courage to fight to "produce French." Today, developing national industry to reconquer the domestic market is government doctrine. Naturally, for that to become reality, we must continue, over and over, to push the class struggle in a constructive manner--that is, by challenging the employers' preference for financial profitability and seeing that a new concept of social efficiency prevails, as is advocated by the draft resolution and as we have begun to advocate courageously.

We must also advance on the problem of temporary employment, concerning which the first measures ought to be adopted, and on the national dimension of the solutions to the crisis.

Concerning all these issues, it should be remembered what the climate was like in the years from 1978 to 1980! How right we were to struggle constructively and courageously.

[Question] Since the Common Program had the effect of linking the two parties and creating confusion as to their positions, their plans for society, and the means for

achieving those plans, doesn't the same danger exist to an even greater degree today, now that the two parties are linked at the highest level--in government action? What is going to differentiate us?

Philippe Herzog: We differentiate ourselves when necessary, but always out of a concern to succeed--to achieve positive results. Our objective is to create the conditions in which the workers and our country will emerge from the crisis. Our electoral setback does not place us in the best circumstances for doing that. But the past action that we have just discussed makes certain advances possible on the basis of the government agreement, which includes some good political commitments. Since we have agreed to help fulfill those commitments, our political action is in line with the provisions of the 23rd congress, but it is also simply a continuation of our policy of recent years: it is necessary, under new conditions, to put across solutions to the crisis and thus to push back the positions and ideas of the employers. Our revolutionary role today, therefore, consists of seeing to the fulfillment of all the possibilities that have been created--of seeing to it that they are translated into concrete results for the workers. We do this in government solidarity for the objectives decided on. When one sees the struggle being carried on by the rightwing and capital against the reforms--very often with media support--one realizes that the workers need the Communist Party in order to achieve concrete results!

Incidentally, it is by becoming aware of those obstacles to action to solve the problem of unemployment, of all the great problems of our society, and of our constructive role that a growing number of Frenchmen will understand, along with us, which important transformations we must work for in order to really get out of the crisis. Our identity is a matter of helping to achieve results and, at the same time, of seeing clearly--of acquiring a broader perspective. We link the solutions with the prospect of socialism for France. We see that prospect as fitting in with action to invest every possibility for constructive change. It is not by one-upmanship or isolation that we would win. To put new ideas across, it is necessary to be constructive.

[Question] Would that mean that we are more comfortable in a small spot with our 15 percent than we were before with 21 percent?

Paul Laurent: More comfortable? No, but evolution is complex. To the extent that the strategy we want (it was started at the 22d congress, and the draft resolution for the 24th congress is recommending that all the inferences be drawn from it)--to the extent that that strategy develops, it is obvious that the situation is better than it was during the period when we had not made that effort at reflection and elaboration. We were behind. But if we look at things from the standpoint of the degree of influence attained by that strategy for the moment, it is also obvious that there is more difficulty than facility. That is why we, as the draft resolution says, place ourselves resolutely before the prospect of a recovery of our influence. We must reject completely any kind of idea of comfort in the setback. We have talked about serious setbacks, and that was one.

[Question] You mentioned allowing the new strategy to develop fully. What is new?

Paul Laurent: What is new is that the political objectives being proposed to the country by the party finally correspond to the requirements of social development and of changes in society and are at one with the idea of French-style socialism.

This is the first time the party has said to the country that what France needs today is a socialism of self-management. Before, our very idea of socialism for France was in fact hid under a bushel by its lack of adaptation to the conditions of French society. That explains the long persistence of the idea of a prior phase that resembled the idea of the Popular Front.

[Question] But the idea of a democratic path leading to a socialism that itself is democratic, involves self-management, and is in the French style goes back to 1976 and the 22d congress. So why is it that something that was difficult yesterday may be less difficult today?

Paul Laurent: It is necessary to understand clearly the contradictory situation that existed: at the very time in 1974 when we began telling the workers they should struggle and become aware of the necessary means, we also acted as though everything had been settled, because we presented the Common Program as the key to change. At the same time, we faded as a party because we called on people to vote for a Socialist candidate in 1974. Those obstacles no longer exist today as they did at the time of the 22d congress, when the Common Program was the political objective to be achieved and the objective of socialism was pushed far into the background. Thus it was that the democratic socialism already being defined by us did not yet appear as the direct response, at the time, to the deep-rooted problems of French society. We went farther at the 23rd congress with the necessary conclusions. With the 24th congress, we want to carry them all the way.

[Question] So in 1976--at that basic point in time represented by the 22d congress--we sized up the lag that we date from 1956 and began to resolve it. But we are continuing to run into the effects of the former orientations, which are still at work in people's awareness and in the people's movement.

Paul Laurent: Yes, but we had not sized up the obstacles to that new awareness that we ourselves had created through the process of the Common Program. We were ahead of the real state of people's awareness.

Philippe Herzog: The form of union involved in the Common Program was fallacious: it prevented the formation of a popular union aware of the ways and means leading to the necessary transformations. In 1976, we were still far not only from such a union, but also from full clarity regarding that problem when we made the choice of socialism for France. But that choice was fundamental and historic. In that respect, I regard the ideas developed in the second part of the draft resolution as being very rich in content. They demonstrate the credibility of that strategic option, which corresponds to our country's possibilities, is anchored in national realities, constitutes a realistic and stimulating way out of the crisis, and is permitted by the international context. It deals constructively with the illusions as a help to overcoming them in the direction of clarity. The advances of the recent period show us clearly that this is possible. The realism of our strategy is confirmed by the influence of our ideas despite the knocks we receive.

[Question] Should not those obstacles have been taken into account in order to be better understood? Did the party make no errors in the period from 1977 to 1980, despite the soundness of its positions?

Paul Laurent: The draft resolution shows very clearly how the obstacles existing among the masses, combined with the merciless ideological war that has been conducted against us, have been able to facilitate the falsification of our policy by the media. This is particularly true in connection with problems where the political struggle has been especially rough, as, for example, our explanations aimed at shedding light on the Socialist Party's policy or the question of Afghanistan. It is obviously even more true when one or another of our actions may have had shortcomings. On that point, the draft resolution mentions the situation of immigrant workers and the question of drugs.

But regardless of any real mistake of that nature, the necessary criticism of it must not conceal the source of our difficulties, which is our slow start in drawing up the strategy we need.

[Question] Here we are in 1981. By his campaign, Georges Marchais broke with the past of a party that itself had given credit to the idea that a victory by the left means that it must sit out elections where the stake is government power. But the media used that past to challenge the candidacy of the PCF's secretary general. They orchestrated the idea that it was not realistic and was jeopardizing the left's chances. As a result, the strategy of the 22d and 23rd congresses--which he, as the candidate in the presidential election, represented in the role of its percussive force--may have seemed just the opposite of what it was, owing to the election results used against us. Shouldn't the advantages and disadvantages have been weighed beforehand?

Paul Laurent: I will give the same kind of answer I gave when the question of means was at the center of debate in 1977, when we were being asked to capitulate. Should we have capitulated on the issue of a candidate in the presidential election and prolonged the party's revolutionary lag in that decisive election; should the worker movement have stepped aside and relinquished the place that rightfully belongs to it--that is the key to today's problems--in the exercise of government power? That campaign cannot be separated from the fact that it was possible at last for Communist ministers to join the government after being excluded for over 30 years. Like the struggles we had to carry on under difficult conditions in 1977 and 1978, the candidacy of Georges Marchais played its part so that what can be achieved today will be achieved and so that the possibilities for progress and the revolutionary party's place in this process of moving forward will be opened up. The ideological and political percussive force of our new strategy was exhibited most clearly during the campaign by Georges Marchais. That is probably where we accumulated the experience whose effects are beginning to be measured today. That is where we perfected the coherence of our proposals and materialized them politically. We see the effects every day. For example, the struggles by the OS [skilled workers] in posing the question of the nature of their work--things like that do not fall out of the sky, and neither do sound ideas about the peaceful use of nuclear energy.

[Question] When a period of events like this occurs in a turbulent situation such as the fitful one we have experienced in recent years, isn't the party leadership's role increased--doesn't it take on more importance?

Paul Laurent: What is true is that when there is an accumulation of events of prime importance in a brief period, one is forced to make decisions from day to day--to

assume important responsibilities daily. It is not a matter of a greater role for the leadership, but when events accelerate, the leadership's role also becomes intensified.

Philippe Herzog: And it is the role of the Communist Party itself which has grown. It has radically adopted this political effort. It has begun to assimilate an entirely new strategy. It has had to take the initiative and assume responsibilities in a difficult situation. It committed itself thoroughly to the presidential campaign. But it must be said--and we realize it in discussing the draft resolution--that we are facing a great effort for renewal and creativity that must be made if we are to be able to deploy our strategy.

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REGIONAL EXPERT EXAMINES PCF STRATEGY, SELF-MANAGEMENT

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[Article by Felix Damette, PCF Central Committee member, deputy to European Parliament]

[Text] The driving idea of the draft resolution adopted by the Central Committee in preparation for the 24th Congress is the notion of strategy. The whole document is centered on this point. So it is a good idea to examine what we mean by this term.

To have a strategy is first of all to have a vision that goes beyond the immediate, the tactical, the day-to-day vicissitudes of development. In other words, it assumes that long and medium term objectives have been established with sufficient clarity to be a guide for day-to-day action, and do not serve simply as a formal point of reference.

Strategy also means the definition of an approach, of a mode of advance calculated to lead to the objectives set. It would be of now use to set objectives without knowing how to relate to them.

Finally, and most importantly, the approach and the objectives should cohere. The value of a strategy is in fact measured by its degree of coherence, in two different ways. External coherence, to be sure; successful adaptation to the concrete realities of the situation, to the developments under way, determines whether it is viable or not. Internal coherence, too; the approach must be defined in such a way that it can be translated into tactical action, while still remaining oriented toward the overall objectives.

The most important new feature of the draft resolution for the 24th Congress is precisely the fact that it is centered on this idea of strategy, its content and its implementation. In fact, it is only quite recently that our strategy has been fully elaborated; unfortunately, this was not completed until the 22d and 23rd Congresses. From this point of view we are neophytes and the PCF as a whole has a major effort ahead of it to get a full grip on its own policy.

In that connection, it must be heavily emphasized that to point out the recent vintage of our strategic thinking is in no way to deprecate the period which preceded it. It is simply to observe that in the latter phase (1956-1979) there was some-

thing lacking in our political armament, which assumed growing importance and led us to some serious disappointments. In any case, it is certain that to make a comeback now we must have a Communist Party that is master of its strategy.

French Self-Managing Socialism

Two landmark dates must be recalled. We said at the 22d Congress that we want to build a French-style socialism, a democratic socialism, that we reject any kind of stereotype, especially one from the outside.

This constituted a clear rupture with the entire period when we conceived socialism in terms of the Soviet model, which had become the worldwide standard.

By affirming a concept of socialism built on national foundations, we were saying that the substance of this socialism must begin from democracy, from the continual expansion of democracy. This is expressed by our abandoning the notion of the dictatorship of the proletariat in our 1976 policy.

Two of these phrases merit a few words of comment. First, "French-style socialism." This does not mean putting a blue-white-and-red tint on a universal socialism. The unique and specifically national character of the socialism we desire is built into its very architecture. To put it more simply, the major features of the French social structure will necessarily have to be built into a socialism which will in fact be the product of their further development.

Next, "carry democracy to its logical conclusion." Obviously this does not mean putting "limits" on democracy. What we are talking about is a break with the old revolutionary model based on the theory of the dictatorship of the proletariat (albeit a more or less watered-down version), a model which necessarily included a "harsh" phase in the revolutionary process, a stage in which it would be necessary to acquire the means to crush the resistance of the enemy, which involved among other things putting limits on some forms of representative democracy. This idea went hand in hand with a rather contemptuous acceptance of contemporary democracy, described as bourgeois, and also of universal suffrage.

By "carrying democracy to its logical conclusion" we are talking about establishing a totally different view of things. This reversal was begun some time ago, in 1973, with a work by Georges Marchais with the significant title, "The Democratic Challenge." We are not contemptuous of universal suffrage and the limited level of democracy that has been attained today in a developed society such as our own. We have no intention of attacking it, even temporarily, in the course of the revolutionary process. The truth is quite the opposite; we want to further this democracy, push it much further, free it from the yoke in which it is held today by the capitalist regime, so that it penetrates social and economic life itself.

And in the 22d Congress, we said that the road to socialism in fact consisted in the continuous development and expansion of democracy, in using struggle and universal suffrage to clear away the obstacles capitalism is constantly raising to impede the flourishing of democracy, to keep the people from managing themselves.

The 22d Congress was a decisive moment in our history; it freed us from the political and theoretical shackles that were blocking the elaboration of our strategy. It was the 23rd Congress in 1979 which completed the definition of our approach by defining our concept of the ideal society, self-managing socialism.

The central idea, expressed for the first time in our history, is that the very predicament of French society forces the question of socialism, that the crisis has now reached such a level that only socialism can provide a real solution.

This is a great revolutionary idea which in its own way constitutes another rupture with our past ways of thinking. We have always argued that socialism, real socialism, was not something coming in the near future, or, in other words, that French society was not ripe for it. So we were forced to set more modest objectives, intermediate stages, which while undoubtedly representing democratic progress, improving the lives of the people, nevertheless remained in a capitalist framework for the foreseeable future.

This approach has moreover been the implicit strategy throughout the greater part of our history. Nevertheless, this line of reasoning was correct for the whole period of the 1930's and 1940's. The policy of the Popular Front or the National Union, which found concrete form in the program of the National Resistance Council, fit well with the real conditions of French society and the possibilities it offered.

The problem was that beginning with the mid-1950's French society began to undergo profound changes. These changes were to lead to ideological upheavals that fully surfaced in 1968. Under those conditions, we could no longer say that society was still not ready for socialism. And starting in the 1970's that society went into crisis and this time it is not only "ripe for" but has an actual need for socialism in order to find a solution to the crisis.

We had to take this diagnosis to its logical conclusions in order to build an overall strategic vision, the vision of self-managing socialism.

The so-called 1956 delay involved all the machinery that tended to make our positions and thinking inflexible, to retain the idea of the model and the theoretical edifice which was tied to it, to hold on to the idea of intermediate stages before being able to talk about socialism; and of course that notion of stages went hand in hand with the concept of union, with a programmatic approach from the top.

With self-managing socialism, we are positing a set of interconnected ideas. For example, if socialism is now a real possibility, this fact must be integrated without delay into our vision and our action. Obviously we are not talking about working for pockets of socialism, but rather about an approach which aims now, explicitly, at the socialist transformation of society. To define such an objective means to integrate it concretely into day-to-day action, to work to increase awareness of the necessity for socialism.

Also, self-managing socialism at the same time means a decision to transcend the simple delegation of power. Certainly, the latter is necessary, but we cannot be satisfied with a democracy which is totally elective and thus representative. We must work to build socialism on a direct democracy in which those concerned, and in

the first instance the workers themselves, will be able to have their own voice and intervene directly to change their own living conditions.

More generally, this concept rejects the very idea of a domestic model of socialism prescribed as the ideal to be attained. We are not looking for a French road to a more or less abstractly defined socialism. We want to channel the contradictions of this crisis-stricken society in such a way as to nourish the rudiments of socialism that history has already engendered. In that connection, the pivotal phrase in the draft resolution is without doubt that excellent quotation from Marx concerning communism as the "real change which abolishes the state as it is today."

This concept of socialism obviously implies a clear vision of what it takes to describe a society as socialist. Some criteria admit of no compromise: socialization of the big instruments of production and trade, political power for the workers, democratization of social relations. These are fundamental reference points for thought and action. Beyond that, however, French socialism will be the product of the march to socialism itself. Defining the objective does not mean establishing a cardinal point toward which one plans to head, even if the path is more or less flexuous. To establish self-managing socialism as the objective is in fact to define the very way in which our activity will be integrated into social change.

The Self-Managing Approach

Thus the question is how to change society, how to arrive at real socialism. One expedient way to approach this problem is to ask what obstacles lie in the way. What, then, are the major impediments and shackles that are preventing the transformation of an exploitive society into a free society? One obstacle is readily apparent: the resistance of the well-to-do, those who reap the profit of this exploitation, using all the means at their command, including repression. For a long time the workers' movement considered this to be the main problem, and it was true for Czarist Russia and Batista's Cuba. It remains true for a large part of the planet.

In such a case, the main problem in bringing about change is acquiring the means and the strength to counter that resistance, whether by arms or by pressure from a state under worker control, in some cases by means of elections by universal suffrage. Whether this comes about "overnight" or through a "democratic process," the basic approach is the same. It was this idea which inspired us, for example, in our work on the common governmental program. Democratic support from a majority of the people was to give the government the means to resolve the problems. But in a developed capitalist society such as our own, which for long years has resolved its political problems through universal suffrage, there is yet another effective impediment to the transformation of society: the vacillations, the fears, the irresponsibility of the exploited themselves, those oppressed by the system.

And is it not fair to say that capital's power to resist is largely founded on the vacillation of the exploited? The strength of the employers lies in their power, of course, but also in the impact of their ideas on the working class itself. This is doubtless the chief feature of a country like our own. We already expressed this idea in the 23rd Congress by noting the contradictory effects of the crisis on people's thinking: arousing both the desire for and the fear of change. We

find this again today in the gap between the levels of transformation objectively necessary and the level of awareness of the changes. But all this leads us to the idea that the attitudes of the workers are themselves also an obstacle, one which cannot be cleared away by the action of the state, no matter how democratic it may be.

The essential question we face is thus how to increase mass awareness of socialism, of the necessity of social transformation. This cannot be done merely by speeches and explanations, though these are necessary. Social awareness cannot evolve without social experience, in other words through the class struggle itself.

Starting with that, we define our new approach, the self-managing approach, with its new policy of union. Firstly, we must above all struggle directly against the concrete effects of capitalist exploitation and of the crisis in the system. This struggle involves all those who are its victims, from which arises the union at the bottom, or perhaps more precisely the union of all those concerned at the level where the problem is manifested concretely. This united struggle at the bottom is everyone's concern; the mass organizations will play a prominent role in it. It must directly affect those concerned and thus scrupulously reject any political tutelage by cartels or various kinds of committees. Secondly, in these struggles, the PCF has a prominent role to play, a clear and unique role. The role of the cells, since theirs is the working level, is threefold. First of all they must see to it that the objectives of struggle are correctly targeted; in other words they must at once be realistic, within the reach of the movement, likely to be at least partially successful, and opposed to the logic of capitalism, in other words in clear opposition to the "profit-redeployment-speculation-collapse-authoritarianism" cycle. Next, there is a need to enhance overall political understanding, to put the struggle at hand in the context of capitalist society's overall predicament and the solutions offered by our policy in general. This requires demonstrating the utility and also the limitations of the successes achieved up to now, while remaining mindful of the capitalist system's enormous recuperative powers and of the necessity of exerting continuous and increasing pressure.

Thirdly, is it not also necessary to integrate the advances made into a coherent view, to conceive them as positions won in order to go still further, as points of support for the next advances? This means that even in defining the objectives of a particular struggle, one must think beyond the immediate, to the necessity of continually raising our sights.

In that connection, the most important thing is to win new rights, means of expression and intervention which will create momentum. Employers, for their part, are keenly aware of this.

In that context, in order to support these struggles, it is necessary to develop a broad popular movement in favor of great national objectives of transformation that go to the very root of the crisis.

All this implies an ideological battle on the essential problems: jobs-unemployment, productivity, national independence, inflation, investment, technical progress, vocational training, etc, and above all a special effort on the fundamental question: the nature of the crisis. We still have much to do to show that the crisis is

above all national in nature, in other words a structural crisis in capitalism, rather than a crisis imported from elsewhere, from outside.

Another necessity is to translate the advances made by the popular movement into political terms, in two overlapping ways. First of all, in political accords with other forces, and in the first place with the PS. The Union of the Left still has a place in our policy, at that level and in that perspective. Secondly, it has a place in governmental action, thereby furthering and giving concrete expression at the governmental level to those accords.

But of course one must understand that governmental action alone can and should be nothing but the political expression of the popular movement, of the struggles themselves.

It is a step by step approach, at a pace determined by the voters and penetrating as far as the advance of the popular movement allows.

It is for the government to translate all this as faithfully as possible, neither going too far or not far enough. It would be a serious and discouraging failure not to go far enough. Going too far would run the risk of seeing mass participation replaced by governmental "crutches" which would then become obstacles to the involvement of the masses.

We can thus talk about the strategy of the 22d and 23rd Congresses to the extent that there is an overall and coherent vision of the path, of its substance and its objectives, including the risks incurred.

This conception is not solely the result of abstract thought. It is the result of experience, and in particular the problems we have encountered. Above all, it relies on an analysis of society, of its changes and of its contradictions.

The Foundations of the Strategy

We base our self-managing strategy primarily on a diagnosis of the changes in society. One might consider the strategy as resting on three great pillars.

First of all, the history of our country. The importance given in the draft resolution to France's uniqueness goes back to the idea that we are an integral part of the historical evolution of this society, and that history has implanted the elements of real revolutionary development within it.

It could doubtless be said, and without any chauvinism, that if there is any developed capitalist country where these elements are strongest, it is France. The democratic and progressive traditions are alive. The traditions of class struggle are solidly anchored, particularly in business and industry. The self-managing movement was doubtless born in 1936 with the occupation of the factories under the control of the workers. These elements should not be viewed as capital which needs only to be made to bear fruit, but rather as currents which must be stimulated, amplified and guided to convergence.

Another pillar is the crisis (and it is doubtless the central pillar). Societal crisis brings into the open the contradictions at every level, and they must be explicitly confronted. The structural crisis in the capitalist system threatens the role and position of individuals in production. It can thus only be resolved by the direct intervention of the workers themselves in the process of production, and at every level, beginning with industry and the work shop.

The third pillar, finally, on which our strategy is anchored, is our very concept of society.

Beyond the basic reasons set forth above, we are defining our strategy as self-managing because that is our concept of socialism. We want to combine representative democracy with direct democracy. We consider that the most fundamental objective and greatest strength of socialism is the people's involvement in their own affairs. So from this point of view there is a choice, one which moreover is consistent with the exigencies and possibilities inherent in the French situation.

But it is vital to understand that when we say that self-management is the highest form of socialist democracy, that does not mean that it will only come at the end of a process. Quite to the contrary, the need for self-management comes into play right now, and it must guide our whole approach from the very start.

Coherence and the Strategy's Content

The ultimate coherence of a revolutionary strategy, however, does not rest on the articulation of concepts, but rather on its substance relating to class.

Socialism is before anything else a society in which the working class plays a decisive role. A revolutionary strategy can thus be assessed in terms of the place it gives the working class. In that regard, one might say that the central objective of our strategy is to move in such a way that, step by step through the class struggle, there is built up a working class capable of changing society.

This poses a problem at three levels: First of all, a working class capable of taking care of itself, with regard to class positions. That implies both the advance of revolutionary ideas and the practice of class struggle, beginning on the job.

Next, a working class capable of inspiring and leading a class alliance. Alliance with other classes is necessary. Not in the form of an undifferentiated front, but with the working class holding a privileged position. The alliance cannot come about by edict, but is forged step by step through struggle. It is thus an integral part of the self-managing approach.

Finally, a working class capable of directing the affairs of the country, capable of offering the nation an overall plan, both for its domestic organization and for its role in the world.

This is the direction in which our action and our proposals are pointed. By the same token this assumes concrete responses to the questions at issue, in other words a concrete program to end the crisis.

This is also a part of our strategy; this is what we are talking about when we discuss the "new French growth." All the ideas we have advanced in recent electoral campaigns are now concrete issues for today.

The important thing to bear in mind about all this is that this new growth is not an economic program, but a real plan for society, or rather a plan for societal change--overall, integrated change (social justice, redistribution of income, full employment, skilled labor, new productivity, scientific and technical progress, enhanced economic efficiency, and struggle against waste).

And all of this is supported by the role of the workers, the new rights, the extension of freedom, and in the last analysis the development of the people. By definition, everything is handled by those involved themselves.

The Relevance of the Strategy

The criterion of relevance determines actual practice. The operational effectiveness of a strategy must be determined by experiment, by its ability to furnish the elements that will make possible a timely response to the needs of the moment, and in particular to unexpected situations.

In that regard, the strategy of the 23rd Congress has correctly interpreted the facts. It has given us the compass that can at a glance orient us in the entirely novel situation that has come about in wake of the presidential election. Despite our reverse, we immediately saw that it was necessary to come forward and become participants in a quite contradictory change.

The strategy of the 23rd Congress has given us a profound sense for what is meant by "respect for universal suffrage." It means more than just accepting the electoral result; it also means trying to fathom its innermost content, even when it is a setback for us. The majority of the voters who want change preferred the reassuring formulations of the socialist candidate and considered our proposals extreme. We acknowledge this, and it has led us to conduct ourselves on the governmental level in accordance with the will of the voters, while keeping our own ideas intact.

The strategy of the 23rd Congress has given us the notion of "political expression of the popular movement." Of course, the movement is contradictory, its awareness of the conditions of change is not up to the level of its desire for change. We accept it as it is, without trying to make it say more than it can at present, but remaining vigilant to insure that the expectations of real improvement in the lives of the people are not disappointed.

Finally, and most importantly, the strategy of the 23rd Congress gave us a clear orientation in the midst of an extremely complex situation: we must use the current contradictions to generate social progress, to struggle against capitalistic disorders, through the intervention of the workers.

The conditions exist to advance the popular movement; now we are facing the great question of means, a question to which--before now--we gave a strong answer, but we did not get the requisite support.

Following the line of the 23rd Congress, following the logic of our strategy, it is now up to us to master this new dialectic: to understand the results of the election and advance the popular movement.

In all, the delay in defining a strategy relevant to society's new conditions cost us dear and served us poorly. We now have the instrument we need to deal with the new situation effectively. But implementation is urgently needed. The French working class needs a Communist Party that can implement its whole strategy without delays. This is the central issue facing the 24th Congress; it is the sine qua non for a resurgence of our influence.

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HERMIER INTERVIEWED ON DRAFT RESOLUTION, STRATEGY

Paris REVOLUTION in French 16-22 Oct 81 pp 20-23

[Interview with Guy Hermier, Politburo member and managing editor of REVOLUTION, by Gilbert Wasserman, date and place not given]

[Excerpts] The draft resolution of the 24th Congress of the French Communist Party [PCF] has just been published. Guy Hermier, a member of the PCF Politburo, who has just been given responsibility by the Central Committee for presenting the report on the draft to the congress, talks here about essential aspects of the draft.

[Question] Let us go to the document itself. It begins with the lessons learned over the last few decades. Its approach is to look both at the events of the historical period and the way the PCF has responded. But here there is something that might seem like a paradox. Many people in fact consider that it was really starting in the period 1977-1978 that the PCF got into difficulties, but the document here considers that ever since that time, and even for some time before then, ever since 1975, when the 22nd Congress met, the PCF has been on the right road.

[Answer] To engage in a critical examination of our fight for the presidency, and more specifically our struggles over the last 3 years--an examination which is absolutely essential--and to fully appreciate the dimensions of the 22nd and 23rd Congress, we have to analyze our total evolution over the course of the last few decades.

The crucial juncture was the 1950's and 1960's, and even more so the 1970's, when the party was confronted with unprecedented problems, with changes in French society in every domain, including the political, where we saw the changing of the Constitution and the establishment of a presidential election mechanism, as well as the real shift that occurred in the international balance of power, and the new thrust of the 20th Congress of the CPSU [Communist Party of the Soviet Union], followed by the development and problems of the socialist countries, the debate on separate national paths to socialism, and the necessity of transcending the idea of a model.

Thus, for the first time in our history, socialism was a real issue of the day, not as a distant, abstract prospect, but as the historically concrete response to the pressing problems of our society. This was what was shown--in its own special way and despite a great deal of confusion--by the events of May-June 1968. At that

time, with unprecedented stakes and in the context of a bipolarization of political life, what was going to be decisive for our party was its ability to give our people an overall perspective in which to grasp events, to define and implement a strategy adapted to the needs of the struggle for socialism in the France of today. As the document underlines, what was going to be decisive was "its ability to create a French road to a French socialism."

What were our party's response to these new requirements? The draft resolution recalls--I will not dwell on it--the combative and constructive role it played throughout those years of opposition to the Algerian War and the advent of the new regime in 1958, then its struggle to help the popular movement take the offensive; not to mention the major work of analysis and theoretical innovation which led to the definition--in the 22nd and 23rd Congresses--of the idea of a democratic road to a distinctively French socialism. But on balance we must admit it took us 20 years to do it. This retardation of history, which hurt us after 1958, and especially in 1968, is the major lesson we have learned from this period. That does not mean that these were lost years, but rather, as the draft says, that "at the time when new forces were confusedly beginning to find their way toward a new option for society, we were not able to say soon enough or clearly enough: socialism is what France must have, and this is the unique kind of socialism we are proposing."

This strategic delay had serious consequences, particularly on our policy of union. It is not that the imperative and continuing necessity of union should be questioned, but the new situation called for union in another form, and with a different content. Now by establishing the objective of an overall and fundamental accord with the Socialist Party [PS], we were reactivating a once-found form of union, which had been most useful at the time of the Popular Front and the Liberation, but was no longer adapted to the new situation. Perceiving the problem, we did everything we could to insure that the Common Program would have the most progressive possible content. But once it was concluded, it created the illusion that the problem of the substance of the needed changes had been resolved. This hindered our struggle to get people to understand the depth of the transformations needed, made us underestimate the decisive importance of the workers' involvement, and in large part paralyzed the initiative of the popular movement. At the same time, the Common Program blurred the differences between our two parties, encouraging voters, even communists, to see a vote for the socialists as the "useful vote." Simultaneously it had the same effect on workers in the new wage-earning classes, who while attracted by the Common Program, did not find our party responded to their deeper aspirations. All this was accentuated by the fact that on two separate occasions we did not run a presidential candidate, thus by our own action lending credence to the idea that change would come about through the effacing of the PCF and a strengthened and dominant PS. Certainly, the Common Program had some positive effects. It crystallized the desire for change and encouraged the advance of the Left, but by blocking the growth of awareness of the scale of transformations that were required and by weakening our own party. As the draft resolution underlines, it was this, in a situation in which the struggle was becoming more acute, which in the last analysis was responsible for the changes in our electoral strength: "A significant comeback after 1958, though not back up to the 1956 level, steady erosion beginning in 1973, and in our most difficult election, a serious reverse in 1981."

[Question] All the same, in analyzing this reverse, one cannot avoid the issue of the consequences of the 1977 rupture. Also, even if this period did see the definition of the strategy of the 22nd and 23rd Congresses, is it not also true that problems in implementing that strategy weighed heavily against us in the electoral results?

[Answer] They did have an impact. But they cannot be understood unless they are placed in the context in which they were engendered. In 1977, the PS's abandonment of the Common Program really demonstrated the dimensions of the illusions that this form of union had inspired. Whereas our own objective had been to see the Common Program succeed, the PS's oft-proclaimed goal was to weaken us, to create a balance of forces that would leave its own hands free, either by forcing us to capitulate or by breaking off the coalition.

We chose not to capitulate, to fight to try to overcome these problems. There was nothing else to do. And it was a more useful experience than people sometimes think. The situation today would not be what it is without that fight and the party that led it. But, under very difficult conditions, we were not able to garner enough strength. In that atmosphere of ruthless ideological war, as we in the Central Committee pointed out in June, some of our positions were even used to misrepresent our real objectives. Most importantly, we were unable, in the short amount of time we had left, to deploy the strategy of our 22nd and 23rd Congresses in their full dimensions, with all their innovations, which "ran against attitudes which were deeply rooted in the past and accentuated by the logic of the Common Program."

So it is not that strategy which is under fire today but rather the delay in defining it and the problems in implementing it. The essential lesson of that whole period is that we must resolutely go forward on the new path.

[Question] That leads us to the second part of the text, the most important, which takes a new look at that strategy. A strategy, it perhaps bears reiterating, is both a definition of the objectives and the means necessary to reach them, the two being inseparable. Reading the document one gets the feeling that all the strategic principles of the 22nd and 23rd Congresses have been reviewed in light of the greater importance now given to the self-management approach.

[Answer] Really, the draft resolution takes a fresh look at the perspective defined by our last two congresses, in order to fully assess their dimensions, to master their content, and to draw all the lessons to be applied to our own activity.

Such a review is obviously timely. Since 10 May all the great issues posed by the crisis have become the burning questions of French politics. The task now is to begin resolving them. Our concept of democratic and self-managing socialism addresses those questions. This is why the draft talks about our option for France, our desire to move gradually toward a new type of society and life for man, a new type of development and democracy for the nation, a new French role in the world. And in order to carry this out, we offer the road of democratic advance, described in detail by the 23rd Congress, a road of mass coalition and union, the road of struggle and an autonomous role for our own party, the revolutionary party.

[Question] You just spoke of union. That brings up the problem of relations with the PS.

[Answer] The draft resolution, quite naturally, brings up this question in terms of the new concept of union put forward by the 23rd Congress. Applying what we have learned from past experience, we plan to surmount the complex problem posed by union between the revolutionary party which we are and the SP such as it is, in the following way: by the development through concrete struggles of a high-level

mass coalition, with each party acting autonomously while cooperating on the basis of political accords which do not encroach upon real change, do not blur the differences [between the two parties], and thus support real action. Experience has shown that this was the right road, and we for our part are resolved to take this practice of union as far as needed, all the way to socialism.

Having said that, most of this part of the draft resolution shows how this option of ours for France is in no way arbitrary, that it is an option based on a deep analysis of the national realities, of the crisis, and of the contemporary world. This analysis is indispensable, for our party is still striving for a clearer understanding of the basis of the historic option of its last two congresses.

[Question] All the same, to say that the advance of socialism must be made within the context of French realities, as the draft resolution says, is not to say anything new. In fact, it is a fundamental principle of scientific socialism that socialism must be conceived as a concrete response to concrete national situations.

[Answer] This is true. It must be admitted, however, that this vital concept was for a long time contradicted by the idea of a single model of socialism. The 22nd Congress freed us from that impediment. While taking full account of the general and historically relevant principles experience has taught us, we conceive the march to socialism and socialism itself as a continuation of the development of the French nation itself, and thus alien from any mold.

This is why the draft resolution tries to distill the principal features of what is unique about France. A secular struggle for freedom, very complex conditions of ownership, the weight of the state and centralism, an indigenous worker movement--all this constitutes French individuality, an individuality which is historically determined, often contradictory and ceaselessly changing. This is what makes France a great, advanced capitalist country, blessed with a cohesive set of indigenous assets but shaken by the contradictions and damage wrought by the crisis in the capitalist system. It was starting from this concrete reality that the 22nd Congress approached such critical questions as property, the state, freedoms, in order to define the concept of French-style socialism. This approach, which has continued to inspire our initiatives, is an inexhaustibly fertile one. We intend to continue to deepen our understanding of the realities of France in order thereby to continually enrich our political practice.

[Question] The draft resolution also focuses on the relationship between the path of democratic advance toward socialism and the current crisis.

[Answer] That is a very important question. The draft lays emphasis on the idea that, because of the fundamentally contradictory nature of the crisis, there can be no reliance on the mechanistic concept of an inevitable, predetermined "cataclysm" which in the course of its evolution would spontaneously somehow cause the whole capitalistic system to collapse. On the contrary, it emphasizes the political dimension of the crisis, the fact that the crisis simultaneously encourages the development both of forces pressing for change and those opposed to it. The Left's victory has not done away with those realities, nor with the gap cited by the Central Committee last June between the high level of transformation needed and the objectives around which a broad mass coalition would be willing to rally. Under these conditions, to think that we might be content to propagandize for an overall program in order

to accumulate the strength to impose our will when the time comes, or that we could circumvent the problem by action at the top, would be an illusion. It is just another way of perpetuating the concept of "overnight change." In reality, only an approach which itself is self-managing, which brings the workers into direct confrontation with the problems starting at the level of their experience in day-to-day life, in order to force partial changes, improving conditions and political awareness at the same time, and thereby consolidating new poor relationships, makes advance possible. The democratic path we are preaching is a process of struggle covering an entire historical period, the only path which makes it possible to more "not simply toward alleviation of the crisis, but toward the transformation of French society in the direction of socialism."

[Question] Let us turn to another topic, that of change in the world. On this point the document reaffirms things the PCF has often said before. It seems to ascribe greater importance to and imply new possibilities for the struggle for peace and disarmament.

[Answer] The draft in fact confirms our analysis of the positive development of the balance of power in the world and that fact that these transformations are the subject of formidable contention. We conclude both that the people now have greater opportunities to prevent war and advance toward socialism in new ways, and that these opportunities will only be turned into realities through intense class struggle.

In the face of imperialism's attempts to destabilize the balance of military force and achieve supremacy in this domain, this is especially true with respect to struggles to preserve and consolidate peace, particularly in Europe. The draft considers, as you have noted, that this will be a major focus of communist struggle. This takes on particular relevance in light of the big demonstration in Bonn and on the eve of the Paris rally.

[Question] Let us talk about the socialist countries. It is not uncommon for us to compare the formulations made by the congresses from year to year. The 23rd Congress talked about the "overall positive record" but this time that formulation is no longer found. Why?

[Answer] Why should we always have to lock ourselves into some particular formula? The draft reaffirms the overall assessment made by the 23rd Congress as to socialism's contribution to each of the peoples concerned and to humanity as a whole. Starting from that point, it tries above all to make a realistic assessment of the changes and contradictions in the socialist countries, an assessment that goes beyond partisan caricatures. The draft appraises the primary trends in their development, noting for example that the socialist countries taken as a whole seem to be progressing today faster than the capitalist countries. It analyzes the problems brought on by their development, particularly those linked to economic efficiency, social progress, and democracy. It underlines, as the 23rd Congress did, that democracy is doubtless the key issue in the development of these countries and that only an overall response to these problems will make progress possible. The draft notes in that connection that in the most recent period several of those countries have carried out original experiments and made original theoretical contributions along these lines, but that the length of time taken to get started on that path, in Poland for example, has created new problems which could become critical. In a word, the draft shows that socialism is a flourishing reality which is continually diversifying; and this shows us we were right in our option to advance here in France on our own path toward the transformation of society.

At the same time the draft reaffirms the determination of communists to pursue their efforts toward a new internationalism, toward international solidarity and collective action alongside the forces of peace and progress.

[Question] In conclusion, on the subject of national and international realities, the docum ... returns to the situation in France at this time. How does the present stage fit into the PCF's overall strategy? How can it more effectively serve, as the document urges, both in the government and in the struggles.

[Answer] Our strategy helps us, I think, to find our way in the current situation. Since 10 May, every step forward has become the subject of real class confrontation. The upper middle-class, the Right, has been mobilizing against the initial measures the government has taken to get us on the right road. Within the Left some forces are openly calling for class collaboration. On the other hand, there is the weight wielded by the workers, the hope they have rested in the new majority, and also the influence of our party's ideas and actions. It is thus in no way inevitable, as the draft says, for the current situation to lead the country into a social-democratic experiment. It is possible to implement another policy besides that of managing the crisis in the interests of big capital. It is from this vantage point that our party decided to do everything possible to succeed, and after determining that there were sufficient convergences between the PS and our own party to make joint governmental action possible, it decided to participate on that basis in the government.

Today, as loyal members of the new majority, it intends to promote its ideas and proposals, and take its own independent actions. And it intends to make itself heard at every level: within the government, in the context of flawless solidarity to carry out the commitments made jointly with the PS; in the Parliament as in the local and regional entities; and in the country as a whole, where it plays its unique and independent role as a revolutionary party. Success cannot be achieved without this irreplaceable contribution of the PCF, and today an increasing number of workers are realizing that it is manifestly in the interest of the mass movement as a whole for the party's influence to be stronger. In other words, we find conditions are now more propitious for successfully translating our strategy into reality.

[Question] The final part of the document proposes a new political practice. Does this new practice derive solely from the fact that the communists are currently in the government, or does it, on the contrary, represent a new concept of the meaning of political activity?

[Answer] The necessity of this new practice arises primarily from our strategy. We are not without experience in this area, but the lesson we have learned from the most recent period is that we have not yet gone far enough in this direction. Naturally our presence in the government and in the new majority further reinforces the need to take qualitatively more meaningful action.

[Question] In this new practice one finds the idea of action within a broader union. This in itself is not new....

[Answer] What is new, however, is the emphasis put on the necessity of translating our concept of democratic advance more effectively into experience. We need to take more extensive action on the ground, where and when problems beset people; we need

to formulate in cooperation with them objectives which are both realistic, because they are within the reach of what can be obtained by struggle, and transforming, because they break with the logic of capital; we need to take action in ways which lead to an appreciation of both the scope and the limitations of successes so far achieved; we need to promote our ideas throughout all these struggles, along all the dimensions of a political practice aimed at using the democratic victories of our people to advance all the way to socialism at the pace the people themselves choose.

Such mass political activity naturally implies taking into account the interests and aspirations of all. In that regard, the draft notes that our proper concern for the needs of the most seriously affected workers should not lead us to pay less attention to the needs of others. It puts special emphasis on the urgent necessity of changing the dimensions and quality of our political activity in business and industry, where we have lost in strength since the 23rd Congress. It underlines the fact that we are prepared to join forces with anyone, in the broadest possible union, to make all possible progress. And, finally, it pays particular attention to its relations with the labor movement and interest groups.

[Question] We might conclude by touching on the procedural problems of the PCF. The document notes the importance attached to democratic centralism, at the same time as it considers that organizational structures are not immutable, but rather evolve along with political conditions. So is it fair to conclude that this new political practice necessitates further improvements in the democratization of the party?

[Answer] The draft resolution does in fact emphasize the efforts to be made to enrich the democratic life of the party, in order to continue to translate its own unique organizational principle--democratic centralism--more effectively into reality. The major pillars of this form--free and penetrating debate, majority decisions, binding on all, without infringing on anyone's right to hold a different point of view--respond to the demands of a party which is leading the revolutionary fight and in order to do so needs to be authentically democratic. This is the reason we reiterate that the system of factionalism is the exact opposite of what our party needs. Naturally our procedural rules are not immutable. Our party has gone through a great deal of change. It will continue to evolve. In the 23rd Congress we introduced major modifications in our by-laws and steps were taken to implement them. We should continue along this line.

Also, it must be realized that this is something that concerns every communist. At issue, more now than in the past, are not only the problems of strengthening the party and gaining broader public acceptance for its policy, but above all enhancing its capacity to take the initiative, raising its political and ideological level. That is a key question. Our strategy of democratic advance would be inconceivable without the support of communists who have a deep understanding of it, contribute to its definition and implementation, and without a revolutionary party that takes the initiative.

CRITICAL LETTERS FROM DISCUSSION COLUMN

Electoral Check; Break with PSF

Paris L'HUMANITE in French 10 Nov 81 p 6

[Article by Georges Poincon, Louis Girard Cell, Malakoff Section (Hauts-de-Seine): "Disapproval"]

[Excerpts] I publicly participate in the discussion opened for the 24th Congress of our party not to teach anybody any lessons especially since I did my best during the presidential and legislative election campaigns and approved their content in general terms.

Today, however, the analysis I am presenting with respect to our double election failure causes me basically to disapprove the resolution draft which was democratically submitted to the party for discussion.

While it is as a matter of fact, always useful to analyze what happened in the past several decades, since history's lessons always cast light upon the present, it seems to me at least necessary to go into an in-depth analysis of what happened in a more recent period of time--something which the resolution does not do or does only very briefly.

Logic tells us that we should start with the last congresses in order critically to review the implementation and correctness of their decisions. Indeed, no theory is worth anything if it is not realistic; now, it appears that there are some things that were not approached realistically and that is what we must go after, together.

I am going to take up here only the one problem that seems essential to me, the problem of the Union.

Today, we can get an even better idea of what the Socialist Party had in mind and, from my viewpoint, it seems that we should start with Mitterrand's defeat in the 1974 presidential elections.

It was from that moment on that Francois Mitterrand's strategy was refined even further so as to enable him to become the chief executive under conditions different from those of the Common Program of the Left in alliance with the communists.

He had to appear both as the man of the left, strongly linked to the Union, and at the same time he had to rid himself of the Common Program and of our alliance.

He was able to hope to win, both over his left at our expense, and over a party of traditional right-wing forces that were weary of Giscardian policy but that was still influenced by the anticommunism which the Socialist Party and the media never ceased to sustain.

An Error in Analysis

I think that we helped things along by demanding, in the course of 1977, the updating of the Common Program, not because that which we were demanding was not correct but because, in a balance of forces infinitely more favorable to the Socialist Party in 1977 than in 1972, it was quite evident that the latter could not accept our proposals which it had already rejected obstinately upon the signing of the Common Program (on that subject, see the report by G. Marchais to the Central Committee, dated 29 January 1972, published in 1975 in "L'Union est un combat" by E. Fajon).

This error in analysis at that time, as I see it, is responsible for our latest election setbacks.

It is under these conditions that the confused French people--because they had placed all their hopes in the Common Program in which they believed by virtue of our ceaseless efforts in its support--were able immediately to react to the announcement of the breakup; but the French people were left with a bitter taste in their mouths which could only get worse because of the growing difficulties besetting them.

Loss of Our Characteristic Image

The Socialist Party and the media benefitted from these favorable circumstances which we offered them in order to blame us for this breakup.

For the first time since the 1930's, our party lost its characteristic image in the eyes of a portion of those who were very loyal to it, that is to say, its image as the party of unity of the working class, the party of the union of all victims of the policy of the monopolies.

From then on, Francois Mitterrand, freed of our "constraint," was able massively to win votes at our expense as well as on his right--hence his success in the presidential election, followed by an even bigger success for the Socialist Party in the legislative elections.

The Union's strategy, as it was implemented during the time of the Popular Front, the Resistance, and the Liberation, is not dead and we had good reason to sign an accord of government and participation in that government with the Socialist Party last June.

Today we must do everything to achieve the change which--and we can see that even better now--will come about only through a broad-scale class struggle in which our party must in a specific manner play its full role as a revolutionary party.

Amendment Requested

Paris L'HUMANITE in French 17 Nov 81 p 4

[Article by Jean-Marc Rennes, Eufemia Cell, Jaures Section, Paris Federation:
"Only a Lucid Analysis without Complacency..."]

[Excerpts] I shall concentrate my remarks on the first part of the resolution draft. Only an analysis of the policy of past years and the causes leading to our party's election setback which is unique in its history will enable the party to regain hegemonic influence over the social movement.

Having joined in 1965, having held the post of section secretary from 1973 until 1979, and being still a member of the section committee, it is an entire segment of my record as a communist which is up for debate. And I have the feeling that the portion of the draft entitled "The Lessons of the Past Decades" has the effect of drowning the past 4 years in the ocean of 25 years of history, diluting realities and responsibilities, whereas we should instead courageously face up to this setback which is more political than electoral even though that may be a challenge to the party's leadership. This is one of the conditions to enable the party to recover its unity and dynamism which it is lacking today. To "build the future" one cannot economize on the past--moreover, a real past, not a past that has been turned into a myth or a mystery. I am not sure that the communists can really be satisfied with this draft. That applies, by the way, to the militants who energetically fought the battle of these past 4 years, ending in a serious election setback, and those likewise numerous individuals who hung back during that period of time. The disarray of yesterday and today--although tempered by the victory of the left which we have been waiting for so long--cannot go on.

An Anti-Unity Policy

For the purpose of clarification I propose the following amendment:

"The policy carried out between 1977 and 1981 and the serious defeat in the latest elections divided and weakened the party and place it in conditions unfavorable in terms of playing a vanguard role in social change. Starting in 1977, the party as a matter of fact asserted that it is necessary to rebalance the left, to its benefit, without which the change would not take place; there would be no communist ministers, the Socialist Party would govern with the right, it would manage the crisis and, on quite a few points, its policy was similar to or worse than the policy of Giscard d'Estaing.

"Life gave the lie to this policy.

"Our party lost a quarter of its votes, the Socialist Party was able considerably to strengthen its influence and today we have a left-wing administration with communist ministers and it seems that a 'real' change is in progress or in any case is possible.

"This failure of the party, which constitutes a heavy burden on its future, and perhaps the future of the social changes in progress, undoubtedly has several

causes but the essential one resides in the anti-unity policy pursued for 4 years. It is certainly necessary to take into account the longest-standing omissions in the drafting and implementation of our policy for the past 25 years.

"The time of the Common Program was much more enriching and beneficial for the party and for change than it was a source of illusions. One can speak of our party's 'hegemonic role' during those years; it was the party which was behind the big political issues that were being debated throughout the land: the nature of the crisis, the communist ministers, the nationalization efforts, socialism as a response to the crisis, etc. The Common Program was made possible as a 'summit accord' only through an intensive mass battle on its principle and its content. This role played by the party as a moving force in this union effort was expressed by the unprecedented strengthening of its organization and its ideological influence. The 700,000 members and the victories in the 1977 city elections prove that. But, in election terms, it was the PS [Socialist Party] which watched its influence grow fastest. The party's leadership felt that--in a situation in which our party was not in the majority on the left--change was no longer possible.

Systematic Denunciation of Socialist Party

"While it mistakenly refrained from publicly taking into account the contradictory realities of the PS by not coming out with any criticism or serious analysis with respect to it, it plunged--starting in 1977--into a systematic denunciation of the PS, thus evidencing one of its greatest omissions: an inability to come up with a dialectical view of social reality. It thus appeared to be anti-unity in three different ways:

"By virtue of its antisocialist sectarianism, its refusal to seek even the least points of agreement and the ambiguity it allowed to arise regarding the issue of standing down from the elections;

"Through an appeal for union addressed to the rank and file, something that looked good on paper but rang hollow in reality since this involved a union--on our positions and around the party--of people on the condition that they had no political opinions and no political affiliations; this was a case of economizing on the traditions of organization and the political grasp of our people;

"Through a return to the questions of alliance with a worker-oriented election campaign, sometimes accompanied by a very pessimistic approach, which failed to take into account the profound changes in French society. This kind of policy underestimated the desire for change and the unity-oriented determination of the workers. It was punished by the way the voting turned out. Only a clear and blunt analysis of this period of time and a democratization of the party's life can enable us to regain the confidence and influence which the party cannot do without if it wants to play a decisive role in the new historical situation that has emerged from the elections."

Leadership Policies

Paris L'HUMANITE in French 26 Nov 81 p 6

[Article by Jacques Bidet, Maurice Audin Cell, Nanterre Section, Hauts-de-Seine Federation: "'Barring None' Means Exactly That"]

[Text] As I write today, on 14 November, 1,700 comrades signed an appeal to the Central Committee against the exclusion of 30 founding members of "Rencontres communistes." It seems to me that a consideration is in order of this document included in the papers for the preparation of the 24th Congress from this podium. This appeal has produced such a vast echo in our party because it is in line with the profound preoccupations of a large number of comrades. It is not aimed at favoring any "tendency." It adopts a position neither on the content, nor on the legitimacy of RENCONTRES COMMUNISTES. On the other hand, it does urge all communists to engage in a collective discussion of the problems which arise today in the party's democratic life. It declares that it is inconceivable to open the 24th Congress by barring 30 comrades under ambiguous conditions and without daring to say so. It is opposed to the idea of shutting off in this fashion the debate which it is said we want to start and it is against the idea of settling issues before the congress which, considering the point at which the party is now, are absolutely decisive for its future and which, by virtue of that fact, are a matter for the congress itself.

Playing Double or Nothing with the Future

I intend to say what persuaded me personally to take part in this initiative and why the reading of the resolution draft convinced me that it was necessary to pursue this line. I believe, first of all, that the party's leadership, for the past 4 years, has adopted a whole series of decisions without any relation with the mandates given by the congress; second, I believe that the determination to oust these comrades is tied to these reorientations; third, I believe that it is indispensable to be quite clear on these issues before any decisions concerning them are made.

There was nothing in the 22nd Congress, which described the advance toward socialism as a long series of struggles, the first of which consisted in the implementation of a Communist Party, there was nothing in that congress which authorized the party's leadership, starting in 1977, to play double or nothing with the future. If the strategy of the 22nd Congress was based on the idea of a "step-by-step" advance with the masses, why was it not implemented from that moment on? Why did they embark on the program road all the way to an update at the summit (a road which, to say the least, was quite uncertain) instead of forcefully pushing our determination to get into the administration and to fall back on the points of agreement worked out and on the active intervention of the workers? There was nothing in the 23rd Congress--which declared the alliance with the PS and the union of the left to be "indispensable"--that would authorize the party's leadership to ignore that issue throughout the entire first phase of the campaign. I want to note here that G. Marchais' speech during the national conference--a speech in which he solemnly spelled out the themes of his campaign--did not contain a single word on

union, nor did he have anything to say about the idea that we could beat Giscard. I conclude from this that these questions, in his eyes, were not on the agenda. And that went on until mid-January. Not a word on union in "L'Espoir au present" [Hope for the Present]. Nor in "Cartes sur table" [Cards on the Table] except to say that union (and he did not specifically indicate whether that involved the government) can be envisaged only under two conditions: that the PS change its orientation and that the PCF [French Communist Party] acquire preponderance. The very rare times when the issue of union appeared in our press before January were almost always couched in these terms. L'HUMANITE of 16 March was still writing about the "Gang of Three." We know what happened after that; just 2 months later, "out of 130 propositions, 110 were common."

Nothing in the resolution draft for the 24th Congress indicates a desire for a critical return to these essential facts. It is hinted indirectly that the administration's current program is more advanced than the one we could have gotten early in 1978. This as a matter of fact is the only argument that could justify both our current collaboration and our refusal at that time. "We had good reason not to capitulate," says the text. This, in all logic at least, suggests that this time we did not capitulate either and that the accord that was concluded is on a generally higher level. This is basically very debatable (let us recall that, in February 1978, the propositions of the CFTD [French Democratic Confederation of Labor], 530 branches, etc., indicated that popular pressure would make possible a better accord than the one which the PS wanted to draw up in October 1977). But let us assume that this was so: why, then, conduct months of campaign around the new "slippage to the right" of the PS and the possibility of its collaboration with the right?

Considerable Discredit

Nothing, finally, enables us to say that "the Common Program favored the left at our expense." If we regressed and if the PS progressed, that was essentially after the abandonment of the Common Program. The reason for the failure must thus be sought elsewhere.

All of these contradictions, all of these twists and turns brought considerable discredit upon our party. "Saying that we look forward to a resurgence of our influence" means above all expressing a desire to see it clearly. Hence, it means discussing without any taboos as to the recent period. And with all communists who participated in this struggle. "Barring None" above all means just that!

Resolution; Afghanistan

Paris L HUMANITE in French 2 Dec 81 p 4

[Article by Daniel Cabuzel, Parisot Cell, Chatillon-sur-Seine Section, Cote-d'Or Federation: "To the Benefit of the Left"]

[Text] I agree with the analyses of Jean-Marc Rennes and Claude Polak in their contributions of Tuesday, 17 November, and Friday, 20 November. I would like to add some personal thoughts.

A Useful Sacrifice

1. The text of the resolution draft itself is not within the reach of the vast majority of the party members. We forget too often that we have people with common sense in our ranks, of course, although their education leaves much to be desired. We all know what the causes are and I will not dwell on them. The time has come to put an end to this method which consists in preceding every assertion with fastidious theoretical and historical analyses. Besides, experience tells us that one can get theory to say anything in order to justify actual practice; just look at our "twists and turns" regarding the lay issue and the nuclear strike force.

2. We have as a matter of fact always underestimated the real impact of reformism in France. The few votes which the PS got were due to its strategic errors in 1947, as well as in 1956-1958, when it went along with the right. We benefitted from these errors provisionally, such as during the time after the Liberation when we were the "party of the rifles."

With its new left-wing union strategy, which we had the merit of having triggered, the PS recovered its real electorate, especially since the centrist parties were no longer credible. This happened slowly but surely.

But this is where we have to stop: regretting this today is also a mistake. We sacrificed the party's influence (which to some extent was artificial) to the benefit of the left, in other words, the workers. This is a useful sacrifice. The country should have been grateful to us for that. Our attitude from 1977 until 1981 should have been enough for it not to be envious any longer.

Let Us Close Ranks

3. In some way, the party is no longer a "super-union but rather a real party in power" with all that this means in terms of caution; in short, from here on in we make "policy." We must address ourselves to all social strata.

It is up to the revolutionary unions to take up the priority defense of the proletarians.

4. We made a mistake in not immediately disavowing Soviet armed intervention in Afghanistan. The Soviet Armed Forces are bogged down in that country the way the Americans were in Vietnam and the following of the local communist party is forever gone. This was a dramatic error on the part of the USSR and we to a great extent had to take the backlash from that. In the future, let us be more cautious in foreign policy (example: the Khmer Rouge, Iran, where our positions ran against the current and where history proved us wrong).

5. Today the only thing that matters is the successful achievement of change. This is no time for reluctance. The party must bring its full weight to bear on the idea of supporting the administration and its decisions. We must create committees of support and vigilance on all levels with all left-wing organizations and those committees must be expanded. So much the worse if, by doing so, we lose some people.

We must not forget that an economic failure of the left followed by a political failure of the left would have been followed by repression which would have greatly resembled fascism because "the traditional right" is now discredited.

Let us close ranks and let us go forward without any after thoughts.

Marchais Statements; Vitry

Paris L'HUMANITE in French 4 Dec 81 p 10

[Article by Lucien Lanternier, G-Corete Cell, Gennevilliers Section, Hauts-de-Seine Federation, communist mayor of Gennevilliers and former Central Committee member: "Setting Our Watch and Checking It (Excerpts)"]

[Text] France is the only advanced capitalist country which presently has a left-wing government with communist participation. But that happened only in a setting in which a communist party shrank to 15 percent of the votes, in other words, in a balance of forces which was expressed in the agreement between the Communist Party and the Socialist Party, an agreement whose positive points and whose limitations we must clearly bring out.

(Lucien Lanternier then stresses the fact that it is not fatal that the current situation commits the country to a social-democratic experiment--but the contrary is not true either. Each step forward is thus representative of a big stake for the class.)

Reasons for Our Setback

(Getting back to the reasons for our setback, he mentions the failure in drafting a new strategy along with the advances reviewed in the draft.)

To this we must add the fundamental importance of our unequivocal condemnation in 1968 of the military intervention of the USSR in Czechoslovakia under impetus from W. Rochet--something which does not show up in the resolution draft--as a rupture with an entire past based on unconditional solidarity with the Soviet model.

Although some comrades at that time (Servin-Casanova) emphasized the need for pushing the analysis to commit our party to new ways, there was a certain failure therefore at that time while some original thoughts were springing up in Italy (Eighth Congress) and in Yugoslavia (self-management). We must try to find out why.

This took time because it was necessary to fight against old reluctance and mentalities, something which applies to me and the others, and because the young members, if I may say so, were still being weaned. Otherwise, how could one understand the self-critical statement by Yves Schebalt (L'HUMANITE, 20 November 1981) on his experience as a young member with respect to the theoretical and practical advances that were being opposed yesterday but that today are elements of our policy.

(Lucien Lanternier next emphasized that our strategy, based on the common program, contained some illusions and was thus responsible for the strengthening of the

Socialist Party to our detriment. He thinks that this concept caused us to persist in working toward a summit agreement, beyond the 22nd Congress, and that it made the debate with the Socialist Party look like a squabble among apparatuses. He believes nevertheless that the common program had some positive aspects. He then covers the entire recent period.)

1979-1981

After 1977-1978, the necessary correction of our orientation gradually slid in the direction toward a narrow policy which undoubtedly was amplified by the bourgeoisie, the media, and the PS likewise. But we must realize that we are not the only ones in the world and that the ideological struggle does not date just from today.

To describe the balancing movement between 1972 and 1979-1980, it suffices to compare two statements by G. Marchais. The statement of 17 June 1974 concerning the broadcast by "Actuel 2" regarding the PS which "abandoned the terrain of class collaboration" and the 15 November 1980 Le Bourget statement when he declared that F. Mitterrand "is not going into battle to defeat Giscard and to lead his party to election victory but to weaken our party and thus to put the PS into a position of making its contribution to the policy of capital."

During the election campaigns, the excesses (the Gang of Three, etc.), as well as verbal violence isolated us and ruined the innovative character of our 131 proposals.

One example here is the damage done by the Vitry and Montigny affairs which the party leadership supported without reservation until the June Central Committee meeting. On that score, our party--which, in spite of all of the adverse campaigns remained the symbol of the fight for liberty and brotherhood among individuals and nations--found its image tarnished. That had immediate consequences not only on the vote in the worker category elections at the Chausson Plant, for example, but also in the vote of 26 April, involving men and women of progress, believers and nonbelievers, manual and intellectual workers.

What, finally, can we say after the actions side by side with the Trotskiyites and the reformists in 1975, concerning the problems of attacks on liberties in the USSR, the interview given by the secretary-general in Moscow, where the media managed to juggle the questions which we asked regarding democracy in the USSR and to get us to fall into the trap of a provocation to the benefit of the PS on the issue of Afghanistan.

These tilts left traces among the masses and left the militants high and dry since they had to defend something which they had attacked yesterday.

For a Successful Change

(Our comrade notes that the right and the employers have considerable resources in bringing about the failure of change and that everything depends on the development of the popular movement; the communists, he says, have a very special responsibility in this fight.)

But, to do that--and that would mean repeating the mistake of 1972 when we deliberately kept to ourselves the portion of the report by G. Marchais on our situation estimate regarding the PS--we would have to include in the resolution draft an in-depth analysis of the strategy of the PS and its role in the socialist international.

Today, under the conditions of the agreement between the Communist Party and the Socialist Party, which reflects the new balance of forces within the left, the strategic objective of the PS fundamentally remains the same: to reduce the influence of the PCF sufficiently so as to be relieved of excessively conscious and excessively strong popular pressure while leaving us enough influence to be a supporting force that would preserve the left-wing image which the PS needs for its policy in France and throughout the world.

(Lucien Lanternier notes that the objective of the PS can be frustrated and that it is necessary to combine government action, parliamentary action, and our intervention in the enterprises and throughout the country toward the loyal and complete application of the accords between the Communist Party and the Socialist Party and to push the proposals of the PCF.)

A New Political Practice

The resolution concerning our election results emphasizes "the fact that it was impossible for us, in a short span of time and under the pressure of events, to deploy the strategy of the 22nd and 23rd congresses in all of its novelty." The question of the gap between our strategy and our practice is as a matter of fact an essential one. It does not suffice to set your watch--you also have to check it from time to time.

Thus we must get rid of an attitude which, in recent times, lumps together and rejects all those who do not share our viewpoint. We must recognize everything that the mass movement can contribute to us, through its diversity, in terms of positive things. This also implies accepting the pluralism of ideas and practices and the necessary democratic debate deriving from that. The party can only become richer and it can only strengthen its capacity to rally the people. The party's action likewise cannot be run from above because situations are complex and diverse--and that is even more true today. What can we say, during the last decade, about the concept of the rather aloof member who wants the communists to learn the new orientations through the media on fundamental issues (abandonment of the concept of the dictatorship of the proletariat, the nuclear striking force, position on the second round of presidential elections). What can we also say about the announcement of the candidacy for the post of secretary-general over the radio during the Festival of L'HUMANITE. Getting away from these practices calls for a renewal of internal democracy.

In practice we are still based on a narrow concept, the exact opposite of democratic centralism, which interferes with the necessary blunt approach in our thought and action (...).

Too often, we reject comrades who ask questions as "opponents." The same goes for the concept which says that the delegation from the section conference to the

federation conference and from there to the congress presupposed a full and complete agreement with the thesis or resolution draft.

We need to catch our breath and we must see to it that our strategy will also penetrate into the party's democratic functioning. As an immediate proposal along these lines I would suggest that all of the contributions to the discussion form, whether published or not, be put out in their entirety, even before the congress is held.

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CS0: 3100/173

THOREZ-VERMEERSCH OPPOSES RESOLUTION, RENCONTRES TREATMENT

Paris LE MONDE in French 4 Dec 31 p 9

[Article: "Mrs Thorez-Vermeersch Blames Present Leadership for PCF Setback"]

[Text] Mrs Je annette Thorez-Vermeersch and several other PCF [French Communist Party] militants, who held office during the fifties and sixties, on 17 November addressed a "letter" to the Central Committee in which they expressed their disagreement with the resolution draft adopted by that body with a view to the next party congress. Mrs Thorez-Vermeersch and her friends justify the collective character of their move, which is contrary to the party bylaws, by the fact that "the party is in danger" and that "an exceptional situation justifies an exceptional move." This letter, to which the party leadership has not yet replied, was on the other hand addressed to a certain number of militants who were asked to give their support to it. It should be published but some of its signers refused to lend their names to its publication. Mrs Thorez-Vermeersch, widow of the late Maurice Thorez¹, and the other authors of this text in particular criticize the fact that the PCF's setback was blamed by the leadership on the "delay" which took place in 1956, specifically blaming the then secretary-general of the PCF. In an appendix to their letter, they cited the "theses" of the 14th PCF Congress (July 1958); that congress in particular came out in favor of a union between the socialists and communists and the transition to socialism through elections. Mrs Thorez-Vermeersch and her friends blame the "opportunism" of the present leadership for the situation in which the party finds itself today. On the other hand, they condemn the methods used against Mr Henri Fiszbin and the other men behind RENCONTRES COMMUNISTES with whom, however, they declare themselves to be in total disagreement.

The letter signed by Mrs Thorez-Vermeersch states that the Communist Party "has tied its fate to the political experiment conducted by the Socialist Party" after having registered a "historical setback which tends to wipe out 50 years of hard work and tremendous sacrifices, accomplished by countless militants who turn their

party into the first party of the left, the first party in France." The authors of the letter feel that the resolution draft--submitted to the communists with a view to the 24th Party Congress--does not respond to the questions which the militants ask themselves and that it is intended "to conceal the responsibility of the party leadership for this defeat."

"Whom are you going to make believe that the major reasons for our setback go back to 1956 and that a correction was undertaken, starting with the 22nd Congress, whereas, precisely after 1976, failure came on top of failure, with the common program running aground and with the party shrinking to 15 percent?" Mrs Thorez-Vermeersch and her friends asked. They recall the results of the 1956-1981 national elections and they evidence the "cave-in" of last spring.

The letter denounces the "right-wing opportunism" which prevailed in the PCF from 1972 and until 1977 and then the "left-wing opportunism" and "sectarianism" of the period of 1977-1981. "We must put an end to the situation that always places us at the mercy of the Socialist Party and that forces us either to capitulate to its demands or to being isolated. We must put an end to opportunism in all of its forms and with all of its reformist foundations," the authors write. They underscore the contradiction in the resolution draft according to which--they say--"in September 1977, accepting a common program which had partly been stripped of its content, was tantamount to 'capitulating.'" But, they add, "in June 1981, unconditionally supporting the only program put out by Mitterrand, which we had rejected for 3 years, was tantamount to 'concluding a positive political accord.'" The subsequent events enable us to get a picture of the scope of the capitulation (to use the term in the draft) of June 1981!" They criticize the "unfailing solidarity" which, under the terms of the 23 June accord between the PS [Socialist Party] and the PCF, is to link the two parties in the government. "What does the party leadership think of the PS?" they asked. "After having accused it so much of 'tilting to the right,' does it believe that it has definitely left the grounds of class collaboration?"

The letter then comes up with a negative review of the administration's economic and social policy and expresses the belief that its international policy boils down to an "aggravation" compared to that of the prior administrations "above all in terms of Atlantic policy." It criticizes the statement in the resolution draft according to which France, while sticking to its alliances, can pursue a policy of nonalignment and progress toward socialism.

The authors then recall that Mr Waldeck-Rochet in 1968 had said that it is necessary to take into account the "national traditions" in preparing the transition to socialism but without "taking a position against the general laws of revolution." They defend the dictatorship of the proletariat, conceived as "the broadest degree of democracy for the workers and for the entire people" and they generally come out against the abandonment, by the PCF, of the "fundamental principles" of Marxism.

The letter denounces the way the leadership used democratic centralism to "impose party discipline" and the practice "which by the way is contrary to the bylaws and which consists in proclaiming that militants who express their disagreements 'place themselves outside the party.'" The authors then add: we affirm our complete disagreement with the positions taken by Comrade Fiszbin and, with him,

a certain number of party members--positions which are aimed at amplifying the party's revisionist orientation and speeding up its implementation. But we do not accept the idea of administrative measures replacing political combat which would point up the dangers of opportunism and revisionism in the party."

FOOTNOTES

1. Born on 20 November 1910 at Lille, she became the companion of Maurice Thorez in 1933 and later on his wife in 1947. Mrs Jeannette Thorez-Vermeersch was on the PCF Political Bureau from 1950 until 1968. She withdrew from it that year to protest against the disapproval--by the Central Committee--of Soviet intervention in Czechoslovakia. In the autumn of 1979 she published a book entitled "Vers quels lendemains?" [Toward What Tomorrows?] (Hachette Publishers) in which she criticized the PCF's policy since 1972.

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CSO: 3100/173

INTERVIEW WITH DISSIDENT WRITER HINCKER ON EXPULSION

Paris LE POINT in French 5 Oct 81 p 71

[Interview with Francois Hincker: "The Communist Party--'Contempt for the Masses'"]

[Text] With a degree in history, secretary to Roland Leroy from 1971 until 1976 and then for Georges Marchais in 1976, member of the Communist Party's Central Committee from 1976 until 1979, Francois Hincker was on Friday placed "outside the party" for having founded, with Henri Fiszbin, RENCONTRES COMMUNISTES HEBDO. In publishing "Le Parti communiste au carrefour" [The Communist Party at the Crossroads] this week, through Albin Michel Publishers, he contributes an important analysis and eyewitness account on the setback of the PCF. He commented for LE POINT on his book and on his being kicked out.

LE POINT: At a moment when Georges Marchais is asking the communists to look back to the fifties for the reasons of the Communist Party's setback, you explain in your book that the difficulties really came up in 1974.

Francois Hincker: When Georges Marchais says that we have been remiss in our analyses for a long time, I agree. But I would add right away that the updating began with Waldeck Rochet, that it was continued with Marchais and that it was then stopped in 1974. Worse than that, it was turned around. At the start of the sixties, two major party leaders, Casanova and Servin, had started this challenge but they were opposed and broken by Maurice Thorez and some young leaders who were coming up at that time real fast, including Georges Marchais.

Question: Why this turnabout in 1974?

Answer: I can see two reasons for that. On the one hand, there was the fear of losing primacy on the left in view of the rise of the Socialist Party. On the other hand, the leadership was shaken by the consequences of this updating effort. Until then in a position of schism with respect to French society, the Communist Party had to get back into the mainstream. This meant reconsidering the concept of a Bolshevik party, of revising its manner of organization and analyzing its capacity to become a part of society. Basically, the communists were afraid of losing their souls. And when I hear Georges Marchais tell us that we are no longer in step, I get the urge to advise him to look in the mirror.

Question: But you tell us that the architect of this turnabout in fact was Roland Leroy.

Answer: There were two tendencies in 1974. In one of them we had the supporters of de-Bolshevization, represented by Georges Marchais and above all by his advisor Jean Kanapa; on the other hand, we had the fundamentalists, including Roland Leroy. The latter were able to carry the day since they displayed more coherence and skill than the former. Leroy really manipulated the 21st Congress in October 1974.

Question: In spite of your criticisms, you came up with a rather detailed portrait of Georges Marchais. You credit him with very great sincerity.

Answer: I believe that he represented something new for the party, something less heroic--and that was a good thing for a while. Unfortunately, this is only instinctive and his good common sense is also made up of trivialities.

Question: This was not the case with the other key man--Jean Kanapa. Why did he fail in this updating effort which he wanted so very much, according to you?

Answer: He based his entire strategy on foreign policy, thinking that the rest would fall into place. He wanted a real break with the Soviet Communist Party but he was not at all interested in the internal functioning of the party and he even used that which he condemned--the desire for secrecy, for example--to conduct his operation. He failed because he neglected domestic policy and the party's internal policy too much.

Question: Basically, everything has been happening between three men for the past 10 years.

Answer: Not at all. To Marchais, Kanapa, who died in 1978, and Leroy, I would like to add Gaston Plissonnier who had a firm hold on the party's organization. Do not forget the three men of the CGT [General Confederation of Labor] either: Frachon, Seguy, and Krasucki.

Question: In your book you also review the party's bad habits.

Answer: The most important one is its revolutionary elitism. There is a real contempt for the masses and there is the rather pernicious idea according to which that which is outside the party must be considered with contempt. Here is a second disagreeable trait: the disdain manifested toward abstract thinking. Action is everything. This shortcoming has gotten worse under Georges Marchais, especially since 1977. The party now only engages in certain "moves and strikes" which never manage to win public opinion over. It has abandoned strategy for the sake of tactics.

Question: To correct its aim, should it change the men at the top, in your opinion?

Answer: No! The men can change and the structures can remain. On the other hand, one can change the structures and keep the men.

Question: Your book is pessimistic regarding the future of the communist party.

Answer: The party leadership will reproach me for that. I do not see how communist values could grow in the near future. I am happy over the changes that are approaching in France today but I am afraid also that the communist current in getting bogged down will only constitute a heavy burden on these changes.

Question: Your expulsion and that of Henri Fiszbin on Friday confirm your pessimism, is that not so?

Answer: Certainly, I will always consider myself to be a communist. Everybody will get the right idea of the legality of these expulsions which really have nothing to do with communists who are not specifically mentioned by name. Does the leadership realize the responsibility which it is taking upon itself? In any case, what RENCONTRES COMMUNISTES expressed came in response to the kind of need that will continue to manifest itself.

5058

CSO: 3100/173

CELLS, MEMBERS OPPOSE EXPULSION OF RCH MEMBERS

Cells Refuse Expulsion

Paris RENCONTRES COMMUNISTES HEBDO in French 6 Nov 81 p 6

[Article: "It Is Going Badly in the Cells"]

[Text] A month after the Central Committee's decision proclaiming that the 30 members of the Rencontres Communistes [Communist Contacts] founding group had "put themselves outside the party," it is possible to give an up-to-date report on the acceptance of these sanctions by the cells concerned.

In 15 cells, the founding group's members have been put outside the party, with two cells also asking for an expulsion procedure to be started.

But it is very significant that 13 cells have decided to reject these sanctions and continue to consider the punished comrades as full-fledged members of the party.

Moreover, a number of them have adopted statements challenging the lack of internal party democracy and the responsibilities of the leadership in this situation. RCH [Rencontres Communistes Hebdo] has already published the motions of the cells of the Saint-Denis and Nanterre universities.

The latter, at its 28 October meeting, was led to confirm its position by 14 votes to 1 after Ph. Herzog (member of the cell) had posed the preliminary question: "Will the cell meeting be held in the presence of Jean Rony?"

Below is the statement adopted by the cell of M. Berlemont (Mennevret, Aisne):

"After learning of the party leadership's decision against the 30 founding members of 'Rencontres Communistes,' our comrade Maurice Berlemont among them, who are said to have 'put themselves outside the PCF,' the Mennevret cell of the French Communist Party takes a stand against that expulsion and asks that the supreme body of the party, the 24th Congress, to be held next February, be presented with all of these questions.

"The fact is that the party leadership is trying to prevent real critical examination of the disastrous policy line followed for the last 3 years.

"The Communist cell of Mennevret retains all its confidence in Maurice Berlemont, who in September 1977 took a stand against the break with the Socialist Party, pro-

tested the Soviet armed forces' intervention in Afghanistan, and condemned the sectarian and antiunitary policy of the Communist candidate in the presidential elections--a policy that lost the PCF one-fourth of its electorate." Adopted by 13 votes to 1.

Many Leaders Sign Petition

Paris LE MONDE in French 3 Dec 81 p 8

[Article: "Two Thousand Members of the PCF Oppose the Sanctions Against Rencontres Communistes"]

[Text] Jacques Bidet, member of the section committee of the PCF of Nanterre, and Jacques Maitre, member of the section committee of Paris-Batignolles, made public on Wednesday 2 December the text of a letter addressed to the Central Committee, which is to meet on 4 December. Messrs Bidet and Maitre, initiators of an appeal against the "de-facto expulsion" of the 30 founders of Rencontres Communistes (LE MONDE of 9 October), indicate in this letter that their initiative has received the support of 2,000 members of the PCF, "broadly representative of the life of the party."

They specify that their letter has been signed "by more than a hundred elected officials, county councillors, mayors and municipal councillors, by several hundred comrades who hold responsibilities, often very important ones, in the leadership of the federations and the sections, in the trade unions and mass organizations, the municipalities and the central organisms of the party."

In the name of these signatories, Messrs Bidet and Maitre ask the Central Committee: 1) to stay implementation of the measure that considers the founding members of Rencontres Communistes as having "put themselves outside the party"--a decision that is ambiguous in relation to the by-laws; 2) to submit to the Congress the whole of the questions relating to the indispensable development of the democratic life of the party, from which the problems posed by the existence of Rencontres Communistes cannot be isolated."

11267
CSO: 3100/184

RCH DISSIDENTS CRITICIZE ELECTION ACTIONS, POLICIES

Analysis of Election Actions

Paris RENCONTRES COMMUNISTES HEBDO in French 17 Nov 81 pp 3-6

[Article by Francoise Durand: "October '80-May '81--A Look at the PCF's Presidential Campaign"]

[Text] Everyone has noted it: the preparatory document for the 24th Congress ignores, apart from a few references in passing, what was really the political orientation of the presidential election campaign. The 29 April and 16 May 1981 meetings of the Central Committee had already done a rewrite of the campaign that lies in the realm of political fiction: it was reduced to the orientations set on 23 March and the decision to vote for F. Mitterrand, and it is supposed to have continued to be unitary and based on the 22nd and 23rd Congresses. Then the Central Committee at its 27 June meeting skipped over that period and tried to explain the election setback by a series of reasons that it put on a footing of equality and whose common link is that they played an indirect role for some, no role for others, and even an inverse role for still others. The document for the 24th Congress goes a step farther: not only is the orientation of the presidential campaign brushed aside, but in particular, it considers that analysis of the causes of the abrupt and unusual defeat of May 1981 is a vain undertaking because it was already in the cards due to the lags occurring in 1956 and due to the common program period, which is judged to have been negative. Such a procedure is entirely lacking in precision; worse, it mortgages the future.

On the basis of the daily L'HUMANITE, REVOLUTION, the CAHIERS DU COMMUNISME, L'ESPOIR AU PRESENT, and CARTES SUR TABLE, this first study contributes to establishing what were the political themes of the presidential election campaign, the quintessence of the new orientation taken in 1977.

Such an approach is indispensable in the preparatory discussion for the 24th Congress.

The National Conference (11-12 October 1980)

The political orientations were set by the National Conference held in Nanterre on 11 and 12 October 1980.

--No political debate preceded the conference in the cells, the sections, the federations.

--Discussion was strictly limited in the federal committees at the election of the federal delegation to the national conference.

--It should be noted that the orientations had already been decreed before that conference in L'ESPOIR AU PRESENT, signed by G. Marchais; it appeared a month earlier and was to be the bible of the campaign.

--The introductory report presented by Charles Fiterman on the first day of the conference was not to be modified at all by the delegates.

The Key to Change: a Stronger PCF

The major theme of the conference was the strengthening of the Communist Party as a prior condition for change.

This obviously transposes to the level of the elections: the largest possible number of Communist votes in the first round.

This idea, already forcefully expressed in L'ESPOIR AU PRESENT, was taken up and developed extensively in C. Fiterman's report, "All the rest has already been seen, already tried, already worn out.

"The PCF has its place in the life of the country and in the government; it is the only new thing, the only real event that can come to pass in French political life --that is what has to be done if one wants a French-style socialism tomorrow. Otherwise, nothing will change."

C. Fiterman concluded: "Providing the Communist Party--that is, providing its fight for change--with increased strength, forcefully establishing its place in positions of responsibility: this, in the last analysis, is the fundamental problem to be solved, the key question of French political life and therefore of the presidential election battle. All the rest is only a side question or political playing." It was on that idea that G. Marchais ended his closing speech: "To unite these women, these men, these young people, bring out clearly this innovative idea: a stronger Communist Party is the key to change.... If the Communist Party does not increase its strength, its influence, if it does not obtain the corresponding position, the working class, the workers, the people, will know only a continuation of the difficulties and the disillusionment. If, on the contrary, the working women and men, the young people, decide to give it this growing support, this necessary position, then great hopes are permitted to the workers and to France. For you, for me, what a responsibility! But also, what an extraordinary combat!"

The PCF is presented as the only political formation that the workers can count on, the only one capable of offering a real change--the Communist candidate will be the candidate of change.

The report describes the contours of change as it is proposed by the Communists:

--struggle against inequalities and urgent priority relief of the most exploited;

--austerity for the privileged;

--liberty for all;

--democratic reforms that attack capital, nationalizations, new rights for the municipalities, the departments, the regions, and decentralization and de-bureaucratization of the state;

--international policy that ensures to France a role in the service of peace, of disarmament, of cooperation, of friendship.

The target dates for change remained very elusive: the presidential election was conceived more as a step toward change than as an event opening up immediately the possibility of change, though such an eventuality was not ruled out.

Change was subordinated to strengthening of the PCF's influence, without which "there can be no victory."

At bottom, the party becomes an end and a means in itself. Consequently, its characteristics are passed in review--and in a very schematic way at that: "A party of struggle and opposition, it is also a party of government, a party of the workers inspired by revolutionary ideas, a party solidly organized for struggle."

The practical tasks, as it is said, are centered on its own activity: the campaign has to be conducted "with flag unfurled," and the accent is mainly on the direction and role of the Communist candidate. The candidate of change, he is characterized as the candidate "of the working men, the working women, the young people, the most exploited." It is indicated that he is also speaking to the intellectuals and to the independent workers.

Right-PS Cooperation

The other theme of the national conference was to attack the policy of the PS, which was characterized as tending toward collaboration with the right, and consequently to attack its candidate.

The contradictory nature of the PS on which the approach of the 22nd and 23rd Congresses was based was wiped out and replaced by a one-sided analysis of the PS, concentrating solely on its evolution toward cooperation with the right.

The past of the PS was cited to justify that thesis: "In truth, all historical experience underlines the hesitant, political character of the PS, its permanent tendency to evacuate the battlefield of challenge of the bourgeoisie's positions." The history of the Fourth Republic and the common program are cited as examples.

The experience of the socialist parties in foreign countries, and especially in Portugal, furnishes another series of arguments. "The PS by itself has never achieved the transformation of society anywhere."

The present policy of the PS furnishes other proofs: "The Socialists openly assert political positions which in all areas converge with those of the Giscardian government."

"They favor the revival of private investment and not priority for revival of popular consumption.

--They brake and impede the development of the popular struggles.

--They advocate weakening of the bases and means of national independence."

"...In the situation of crisis of capitalism and especially in the profound crisis of today, the PS by itself can offer no other prospect than its pure and simple

participation in implementation of the brutally antipopular and antinational policy of the right. There is no real social-democracy that could be distinguished from such a policy. Everything shows that it is into this perspective that the present policy of the Socialist Party fits--not at all into the perspective of change.... Francois Mitterrand is opening up the possibility of setting up direct collaboration between the right and the Socialist Party following the presidential election--collaboration already inaugurated, as I have noted, by R. Fabre. Unfortunately, he places at the service of this right-wing policy the forces that he won in the period when he was forced to subscribe to the common program."

Giscard, Chirac, Mitterrand--it is all the same; and Mitterrand is even worse, because he guarantees "to capital's policy a broadened support, that famous consensus which the leaders of the bourgeoisie call upon at will. This danger is serious--it constitutes one of the fundamental stakes of the presidential election." Indeed, attacking the policy of the PS and its candidate was a fundamental objective of the presidential election campaign. It was written into the national conference, and one should not let oneself be deceived by the relatively small space occupied by the analysis and judgment made of the PS in the report.

"The Right Is a Rut"

"The right is a rut" is a theme which quantitatively takes up considerable space in the report.

The crisis and its consequences are analyzed. The responsibilities of Giscard and of the other forces of the right are denounced at great length, and rightly so.

But one cannot help but note what is obvious. Not once is the clear objective of hitting at the right brought out in the report. It is only said that "to get France out of the crisis, a complete change of orientation is necessary." Hitting at the right is used only once by C. Fiterman. It should also be noted that the context of the sentence could quite easily make one think that it is a matter of a longer-term outlook than that of the presidential election campaign.

Not once did G. Marchais, the newly nominated candidate, speak of hitting at the right in his closing speech.

It is right to wonder about the negative repercussions which the absence of such a theme could have on the evolution of the election campaign.

Likewise, one cannot fail to appreciate the positive effects of the explanation of the crisis and the specifying of those truly responsible for it by the Communist candidate in the maturing of awareness for change.

What were its contradictory effects? The question remains open.

The Moribund Union of the Left

The union of the left is a minor theme that is disappearing.

Our questions of principle were forcefully recalled: "There is no question of renouncing the union." It is the only time in the report that the term "union of the left" is used--and it is specified in the following sentence that no agreement with the PS is possible between then and 26 April.

"...But obviously, the present policy of the PS does not permit such an agreement. And one does not see, from the point we are at, how the basic facts of this situation could change between now and 26 April. Therefore, seeking one would only end in an impasse..."

The way in which the report approaches the problem of the second round is significant of the abandonment of our unitary initiative. Since the second round will unfailingly pose the question of union of the left, that question is avoided, discredited, treated as a "trap" question.

"It is in order to obscure this decisive question (the strengthening of the PCF) that the leaders of the right and those of the PS are raising the question of the second round. Caviling endlessly about it, doing computations worthy of lunch-hour business strategists while passively waiting for it to happen: this is to fall into the trap, and we shall not do so."

It is quite natural for a candidate in a two-round election not to delay on the question of withdrawal. But such silence takes on a political meaning when the union of the left is reduced to a bare subsistence level. Furthermore, in CARTES SUR TABLE 2 days after the national conference, G. Marchais was no longer silent on the question of withdrawal. It was then that he made the now famous statement: "The formula of automatic withdrawal is out of date."

Finally, the possibility of a victory of the left and of a government of the left was not even envisioned as a hypothesis, still less as a goal to be reached.

Thus the national conference did not put forward any political prospect of immediate change for the presidential election campaign. It underestimated that profound aspiration in the country.

The First Phase of the Campaign: Strengthening the PCF

The strengthening of the PCF was indeed asserted as the major theme of the campaign. Its validity was confirmed and amplified by the Central Committee meetings of 12 January and 5 March.

There was no speech, no television appearance, no interview, no declaration so insignificant that that idea was not put forward.

The Plan for Struggle: the 131 Propositions

The content of the change was specified by the issuance of the plan of struggle, comprising 131 propositions. It was presented to the press on 20 November. The book "Cartes sur Table" [Cards on the Table] published by the economic section explained it. Four objectives were put forward, with three means for achieving them. They are based on the axes of change defined at the National Conference.

Everyone recalls the 131 propositions, and we can refer to them. How is the plan of struggle to be characterized? This question is still of current interest.

"The same idea, the same conviction runs through all the propositions that I formulate," said the Communist candidate. "In order to get out of the crisis, it is necessary to respond on a priority basis to the needs and the aspirations of the

workers, men and women, of the exploited young people, and for this purpose it is necessary to attack vigorously the profits, the privileges, the messes of the exploiters." It is certain that this plan helped make the French take the measure of the changes necessary. And this is positive. Each of the propositions, considered in itself, is legitimate. But one has to note that a plan of struggle is not exactly a program of government. (Furthermore, in the internal meetings, a sharp distinction was often made between plan of struggle and program of government.) Without the political conditions for carrying it out--no one seriously thinks that the Communist Party can govern alone--this plan has no credibility. It is a catalog of demands, coherence among which is not sought but which are juxtaposed. It is significant that it was in the press conference for presentation of the plan of struggle that the presidential election was considered only as a phase toward change: "The more farsighted and determined the support for these objectives is, the better shall we succeed in bringing them about. It is in this movement that union and change will be imposed. This will happen, of course, by way of a phase constituted by the presidential election." More than for governing, this plan was designed for developing struggles and polarizing the support of the workers.

Defense of the Most Exploited

The emphasis placed by G. Marchais on the presentation of proposition No 30 on the day of the press conference and in the speeches that followed is evidence of this. Proposition No 30 increases the income tax starting from Fr 16,000 per month and reaches 100 percent on incomes higher than Fr 40,000. "I am not a demagogue," said the Communist candidate. "This is clear. As you see, he who laughs last laughs longest" (30 November, in Paris). "...I need only mention this proposition and the hair of the gilt-edged journalists stands on end" (Amiens, 26 November).

The "Forum of L'HUMANITE and of ECONOMIE POLITIQUE" on 25 February, in which 250 representatives of enterprises took part, was to help define the depth of the changes necessary.

The essential part of the election campaign was based on defense of the interests of the most exploited among the workers, the white-collar workers, the tillers of the soil, the young.

It was a constant in all the speeches in all the regions of France. G. Marchais addressed himself more particularly to the workers at Renault in Boulogne Billancourt, to the skilled workers in Le Mans. It was with them that he began the campaign. It is interesting to note that in those two speeches, as reported by L'HUMANITE, the policy of the PS was not mentioned or sifted, whereas it was everywhere else. Is the working class supposed to be insensitive to reformism? Isn't it idealized, mythified? On the other hand, one may wonder about the impact of a policy that is addressed to all the workers without distinction, including those of Renault: "It is you, the most exploited, who have the greatest need of change," declared G. Marchais at Billancourt.

And isn't the situation different for the workers of the RATP [Independent Parisian Transport System], the textile workers of Troyes and Cholet, the miners of Carmaux or the agricultural workers of Brive? May one, as the Communist candidate did, give them all the same speech? Two important initiatives were to take place for the white-collar workers, on 23 October in Paris and on 3 April. The convergence of their interests with the worker class was stressed. The most exploited among the white-collar workers were addressed.

The Allies of the Working Class

A number of specific initiatives were taken toward the engineers, managerial personnel, technicians, intellectuals--at the Orsay Faculty and at the Mutualite in January, with the technicians at La Courneuve in February, with the engineers at Grenoble in March.

The problem is not so much with the number of initiatives taken as with the policy employed.

The national conference and the Central Committee meetings of January and March did not really take up, during the election campaign, the question of the alliance between the working class and the intellectuals that was nevertheless judged so important by the 23rd Congress. In contrast, one noted during that period a veritable slipping-away of our concepts, which grew distant from the Central Committee meeting of Argenteuil and the National Council meeting of Bobigny--a slipping-away that had begun in May 1980 and appeared clearly in certain articles in REVOLUTION, notably those on production [as published].

At the Mutualite, G. Marchais indicated that the plan of struggle "responds to the interests of the vast majority of intellectuals, because it attacks the deepest cause of the crisis in intellectual and cultural activities--that is, the intolerable segregation of which the workers in all fields are victims."

Some have spoken, with regard to this policy, of a rallying of the intellectuals to the working class; but it seems more correct to speak of subordination of the interests of the intellectuals to those of the working class.

In Grenoble, the candidate no longer addressed himself to the engineers in terms of alliance. He even declared that it was necessary to get beyond "simple alliance between different categories with different job qualifications and hierarchical positions."

The employers of the PME [Small and Medium-Size Businesses] were the target of virulent attacks, whereas the 22nd and 23rd Congresses had demonstrated that the PME could enter into the antimonopoly alliance, even if such alliance contained conflicts.

In L'ESPOIR AU PRESENT one can read that "the PME have to live; this is necessary for our economy. But it is not admissible that they should live on the misery of the wage-earners." This question was taken up at La Rochelle, at Le Mans, at Amiens: "The small employers will not make us cry about their fate. Since VGE [Valéry Giscard d'Estaing] has been in the Elysee, apart from the small agricultural enterprises, they have seen their profits increase by 96 percent."

At the Central Committee meeting of January, the report stressed that "the vast majority of the owners of the small and medium-size businesses are making substantial profits, and often by exploiting ferociously the men--and especially the women--whom they employ. What to do? Keep quiet and change nothing, or worse, promise this body of employers more profits, as if such cajolerie had ever led to improvement of the lot of the workers, or to the employers renouncing their role as pawns for the big bourgeoisie?"

The election campaign as aimed at women was conducted exclusively with regard to the most exploited women workers--skilled workers, textile workers, white-collar workers--on the occasion of public meetings in the various regions of France. The political themes were played down extremely by comparison with the policy carried out in the preceding period, even though that policy was itself very far from perfect. In particular, it was not creative and did not take into consideration all the dimensions of feminism, though its aspirations are so strong and multiform, ceaselessly in movement in French society, which they irrigate and enliven. The political themes related mainly to the quantitative demands and somewhat to liberties, equality. G. Marchais declared at the Parc de Choisy at the beginning of March: "For women, it is easy to understand. There is no need of great high-sounding and empty statements. Change means something concrete, practical, what you need in your lives. Change means living better, equal and free in a world at peace."

Vitry-Montigny

The Vitry affair broke out at Christmas. That affair and the Montigny one in February aroused serious questions and censure from many Communists and among the electorate throughout the entire campaign. These two affairs were the logical outcome of a policy line. The party was not fighting to win the presidential election but rather to strengthen itself; but it is dismaying to think that it believed it could strengthen itself in this way.

Some Malian workers housed by the Giscardian mayor of St-Maur were removed by him to Vitry, into a building that the municipal administration had intended for young French workers. The Communist municipal administration wanted to force them out. In the course of a serious incident it even called on the services of a bulldozer. For many Communists, the Vitry affair created a serious crisis of conscience. The very ethic of their commitment was involved. On the political level, the unity of the working class was shaken. It should be stressed that at no time did the Central Committee meeting in January, or the party's candidate in his letter to the rector of the Paris Mosque, go into the incidents in themselves, except to say that they approved of them:

"The merit of the Communist elected officials of Vitry and of the mayor is that in the face of the indecent and boorish provocation by the Giscardian mayor of St-Maur they took such action. They were and they are right. They are right in particular not to have let themselves be impressed by the uproar from our adversaries regarding a few incidents explained by the population's indignation at the show of force, the desire to thwart it--an incident for which Beaumont and his accomplices bear the entire responsibility." (Central Committee meeting of 2 January)

"I say to you clearly: yes, the truth of the facts leads me to approve without reservation the response by my friend Paul Mercieca, mayor of Vitry, to the racist aggression of the Giscardian mayor of St-Maur. More generally, I approve his refusal to permit an increase, in his municipality, of the already high number of immigrant workers. This approval does not contradict the Communist ideal. On the contrary." (Letter, 6 January, to the rector of the Paris Mosque)

Whenever the Vitry affair is brought up, it is the occasion for long expostulations on the PCF's policy toward immigration--a policy that can be disputed but that had up to that time been put through its trials and had the approval of the majority of

Communists, and well beyond them, of progressive people. But such a policy cannot be credible if it has to lead to affairs, such as that of Vitry, that are in complete contradiction with it.

The same is true about the Montigny affair. The process was identical. The Montigny affair was to make it possible to develop the PCF's policy concerning drugs--a policy that can rightly be disputed and criticized; but the informing against a young Moroccan by the Communist section of Montigny, supported by the party leadership, was passed over in silence. Talk about it is avoided, and replies are not even to the point.

"So we are accused of 'informing'! I want to say, this evening in Montigny, to those who turn to such insults: gentlemen, if that is the way you hope to impress us, you are really deceiving yourselves seriously. The Communists are not going to keep quiet. They are determined to break the law of silence imposed by fear, interest, cowardice. And if you who attack us prefer to find yourselves on the side of those who deal in death, that is up to you. You have chosen your ground. We, for our part, prefer life...."

"...Yes, R. Hue acted with rectitude and courage, heeding only his duty. That is why I want, here, loudly, to reaffirm to him my entire solidarity. This is the same approach that inspired the Communist deputies and senators when they made public last Monday the text of a bill that includes precise proposals for combating drugs...." (Speech at Montigny on 21 February)

For many Communists, the question is still forcefully posed: how could such acts have been possible? The fact that the preparatory document for the 24th Congress admits that the Vitry and Montigny initiatives "were not without fault" cannot in any case satisfy the most elementary requirements in this area.

Make the Socialist Candidate

This theme remained central. As the election campaign advanced, the criticism, the attacks, got stronger by comparison with the national conference. This is clear when one compares the national conference with the Central Committee meetings that followed it in January and March.

Whereas at the national conference C. Fiterman indicated that the PS was orienting itself toward collaboration with the right, the introductory report of the Central Committee meeting of January asserted that there was "now a three-way consensus among Giscard, Chirac and Mitterrand to turn the screw." Giscard, Chirac and Mitterrand were accused of acting together in a "campaign to smother." The report asserted that there was "a three-way consensus for anticommunism" with regard to the most diverse events of national life, Vitry, Poland.

"The objective of this vast political operation is clear: to channel discontent and orient it into an impasse, to thwart change, to establish in one form or another a durable cooperation between the entire right and the Socialist Party with a view to ensuring the continuation and aggravation of the policy of capital. It should be noted that this 'three-way consensus' has already begun to function, even if it is still within certain limits.... The first example: there is three-way consensus to try to make the presidential election campaign a campaign to smother, a campaign of ignorance, thwarting great fundamental debate on the great questions that concern

the country... Second example: there is three-way consensus for anticommunism. Our party--with the CGT, on the trade-union level--is the target of violent attacks coming both from the right and from the PS. The big media, complacently and all in perfect harmony, make themselves the vehicles for these attacks. Veritable operations are organized and carried out--operations in the military sense of the term, with all that that implies of organization, coordination, intensity...." (Central Committee meeting of 12 January).

There is lengthy stress on all the aspects of the internal and external policy of the PS, with the conclusion that there is complete incompatibility with that of the party and that it aligns with that of the right. In characterizing the rightward drift not as a trend but as a "durable cooperation with the right" (Central Committee report of January), the party's leadership acted as if it wanted to push the PS to the right. But the disparity between the policy of the PS and what the party said and repeated about it escaped no one.

The Central Committee meeting of March accentuated these orientations further. "G. d'Estaing and F. Mitterrand are going forward in the campaign like two old cronies, two duet players; they choose one another as adversary partners." In the Central Committee report and resolution of March, the Socialist Party is accused of plotting, in the literal sense. "The first secretary of the PS has just revealed it: his party is presently organizing an undertaking to attempt to shake the Communist Party from the inside and from the outside. Thus, not only are F. Mitterrand and his friends rejecting the proposals for a government of union of the left, for which he had declared himself in favor, but they are also disclosing that their real objective, their No 1 goal, is the very one that the employers and the power of capital have been pursuing for decades: weakening, even dismantling, the PCF."

An evolution similar to that of the Central Committee's is found in the candidate's speeches.

The anti-PS attitude is systematic, and it is impossible to present an exegesis of it here. All registers of criticism were used. For example, Marchais declared at Charleville on 28 November: "Obviously, no one thinks that F. Mitterrand's candidacy will belie the proverb 'never two without three'." One of the most remarkable speeches concerning the rupture of our unitary strategy was the speech in Le Havre on 30 October. The Socialist Party was systematically and unilaterally described as responsible for the "reverses" suffered by the popular forces in 1936, in 1945, in 1978.

"But the Popular Front was also an experiment that did not live up to its promise, that stopped short... In the last analysis, the Popular Front failed, it collapsed, under the blows of the PS, its policy, in its own terms, of "dependable management of capitalism...."

"...But in 1947 too, the PS abruptly put an end to that experiment...."

"...Finally, the most recent experience concerns the common program of government. As I have shown, F. Mitterrand made his party turn to the right and broke the union achieved with us. Once again, the PS renounced its commitments. And this time, even before the election victory...."

All the speeches could be cited. Everyone remembers one or the other of them. We simply cite one more example. F. Mitterrand's book appeared in September-October 1980. In it he outlines the great reforms (nationalizations, decentralization, abolition of the death penalty) that he proposes to undertake if elected and which are presently being carried out. In the Great Debate of 5 November, the book was described by Marchais as "story-telling and anticommunism."

What Is Becoming of the Union of the Left?

Quantitative study of this question immediately reveals the extent to which it has been abandoned. In several speeches, it is declared that "we do not renounce union," but most of the time, it amounts to a small sentence somewhere in the speech.

The concept of union of the left--of fundamental importance in an election campaign that took place within the framework of an increasing approach toward a majority for the left in France--was absent.

According to the accounts provided by L'HUMANITE, these two terms were uttered positively for the first time in the candidate's speeches only on 13 December at St-Brieuc, on 21 January at Rennes, on 28 January at Levallois, on 4 February and 3 March in Paris: 5 times in a total of 6 months of election campaign, and in only a few words each time.

In effect, up to 23 March union of the left was considered impossible.

At Brive on 10 November, Marchais specified that: "If he had the feeling that there was one chance in 10 of reestablishing the union by the method followed previously, he would seize the opportunity and go to see Mitterrand. But one has to look at things squarely. In view of the rightward orientation that Mitterrand has impressed on his party, such an approach could result, in the present situation, only in confusion and failure...."

No matter how strong the will shown by the party's leadership to implement that policy line, it could not escape the contradictions that it entailed. It was impossible to avoid the question of power and the participation of the Communists. Even if the party leadership's reason for calling for Communist ministers was to brake the advance of the PS by scaring the moderate voters, this did not prevent the question of power from being posed.

Even if the motivation were different, this approach, by posing the problem of power, implied that of union. It represented progress, since it was not envisioned at the national conference. It was evoked on two occasions, and very elliptically, during the first 2 months of the campaign--in Le Havre, on 30 October and 28 November, in REVOLUTION, in an article entitled "A New Blow for France." Then it was evoked twice in December--at Nice on the 6th and at Nimes on the 8th. The Central Committee meeting of 11 January devoted an entire sentence to it: "We are prepared to take on all our responsibilities in implementation of the policy that France needs, including the governing of the country." At the end of January at Levallois and at the Mutualite, before the intellectuals, the need for Communist ministers was evoked. The report for the Central Committee meeting at the beginning of March devoted some 10 lines to it. This theme was amplified a little later, and L'HUMANITE, reporting the Central Committee meeting, stated, in a subhead, for the first time since the beginning of the campaign: "Communist Ministers Are Needed."

Posing the necessity of Communist ministers had the inevitable consequence of reactivating the questions of union of the left. Initially, the two themes were evoked separately and very briefly. The "Great Debate" of 4 February had to be awaited before they were finally joined in a coherent thought: "The rallying of the French, on a new political basis, the foundation of the union of the left, is necessary. This union must be extended into the country and the government. If I am elected, there will be a government with Socialist and Communist ministers."

In the Central Committee meeting of 6 March, only the necessity of Communist ministers was stressed; there was no talk of a government of union. However, it was obvious at the beginning of March that the policy line followed was posing an increasing number of problems to the party leadership, that there was no certainty about it, that it was desired to bend it. I offer as proof the 12 March televised appearance of the candidate before the presidential-election press corps. He specified what the political and Parliamentary scenario would be if he were elected. Pressed by a journalist, he even spoke of an agreement to be negotiated with the PS before the legislative elections. This topic had not even arisen before that. Nor was it to arise again until after 10 May--not even in the CARTES SUR TABLE of 23 March.

"Anti-Giscard"

During this entire period of the campaign, Giscard d'Estaing's policy continued to be denounced with great vigor in its more harmful aspects. The Communist candidate was "anti-Giscard." Being anti-Giscard implied opening up a political perspective, which was not the case, and it is significant to note that it was in December, when the candidate again evoked union of the left and Communist participation in government, that the clear call to hit at the right made its appearance: at St-Brieuc on 13 December, after 2 months of election campaign. It was to be evoked on two occasions in January, at Massy and especially at Rennes, on the 21st, when it constituted the big headline over the report of the speech in L'HUMANITE: "Sweeping Out Giscard d'Estaing and Putting a New Policy into Effect." That slogan then made some small progress--on 3 March, for example, in the declaration on the occasion of the announcement of Valéry Giscard d'Estaing's candidacy. But until 23 March, it was very secondary and was relegated to the background.

23 March: the Bend

CARTES SUR TABLE of 23 March marked an important bending of the end of the first-round campaign. On television, Marchais developed three ideas:

- the Communist candidate is the only one proposing a program for real and durable change;
- the Communist candidate takes a clear stand in favor of a government of union of the left, composed of Socialist and Communist ministers;
- the orientation of the PS poses a problem for the present and the future. The solution for union and change is to vote for the Communist candidate in the first round.

As C. Fiterman stressed in the L'HUMANITE editorial of 25 March, "there is a way out," and Marchais on 8 April: "on 23 March I opened up a way." This is an explicit admission that the party had not opened up any political perspective during the 6 months that the campaign had gone on.

In brief, the party leadership seemed to be taking again the outlook of a victory of the left. This bending remained very ambiguous. How can one help but remark, and be surprised by, such a change occurring 15 days after the Central Committee meeting of March without that meeting's having clearly decided on it?

The fact remains that at the end of March and the beginning of April, L'HUMANITE was now printing headlines about union and change:

15 March--"Government of Union with Communist and Socialist Ministers";

6 April--"A Government of Union of the Left Based Sincerely on the People";

8 April--"Driving Out Giscard and His Policy";

20 April--"The Useful Vote for Union and Change Is to Vote for G. Marchais."

Nonetheless, the themes developed during the first 6 months of the campaign subsisted and coexisted with the new orientation. L'HUMANITE continued to take pot shots at the PS. The strengthening of the party continued to be considered a prior condition for any change: "change will not take place no matter who is the host in the Elysee." (Marchais in Paris, 4 April)

This bending brought more people to the candidate's meetings. But the ambiguity remained very strong, and 6 months of election campaign in which union was considered impossible and even undesirable were not to be wiped out easily.

The Second Round: About-Face

The second round of the presidential election marked a complete turnaround of the political orientation followed up to the first round. The secretary general's testy appearance on television in the evening of 26 April did not foretell this.

The Central Committee meeting on 29 April decided to call for a vote for the Socialist candidate in the second round. However, none of the forecasts counted on by the party leadership came to pass. On 24 April, Marchais predicted on television that "the positive result that we need is within our reach."

None of the conditions imperatively set at the national conference came about in reality; the opposite even occurred. The rebalancing of the left to the advantage of the Communist Party, set as a prior condition for change, was rejected by the electorate. The presidential election proved to be a decisive event, contrary to what had been asserted.

It seems obvious that the score achieved by the party forced the leadership to go back to a policy of union, even though it refuses to admit this.

The arguments advanced to justify the decision to call for a vote for Mitterrand are seriously out of phase with those of the first round, not to say in complete contradiction with them. There is no longer any question of a rightward turn by the PS. The idea was put forward that Mitterrand was for change and that his voters considered him to represent it, but that his orientations were nebulous. It was also specified--in case it was not obvious to everyone--"that we had characterized that orientation in that way before the first round, and that nothing in Mitterrand's attitude makes for a change in our evaluation." The Communists will be there to help construct the change with the workers.

It was an analogous line of argument that was to justify the PS-PCF agreement signed on 4 June. Whereas for 7 months it had been judged impossible by the leadership, since there was no convergence between the 131 propositions and the Socialist program, suddenly the agreement proved possible and desirable. This is what Marchais declared on Antenne 2 on 1 June: "Our policy has been an ongoing policy of union. We have strived to conduct it with clarity. I say that there are bases for a very broad agreement between the PS and the PCF."

Several days later, the Communist candidates ran in the legislative elections as candidates of the presidential majority, with reference to the PCF usually omitted.

The political themes of the PCF's presidential campaign do no represent only the weight of the past on the present. They have their roots also in its present and future policy, as projected by the preparatory document for the 24th Congress.

Questions to Debate

Paris RENCONTRES COMMUNISTES in French 6 Nov 81 p 6

[Text] In issue No 15 of RCH we published the text of the letter which the Rencontres Communistes founding collective had sent to the CC [Central Committee] on 5 October, to submit to it five specific propositions for a democratic congress, so that the Communists' discussion with a view to the 24th Congress can make it possible to pose clearly, discuss clearly, settle clearly the questions that have been agitating the party for months, arousing debate and controversy. It is not useless today to recall the passage concerning this aspect of matters:

"Nothing would be more harmful than to submit to the party a nebulous and ambiguous text. In recent times, the leadership has successively adopted some radically opposite attitudes, without consulting the Communists and without explaining themselves to the masses. This situation should not be repeated.

"From our point of view, the following problems should be taken up in particular:

"What analysis of the crisis can be made after the victory of 10 May?

"What is the nature of the change that has just taken place in France?

"Is the dominant characteristic of this change that of a social-democratic experiment, or does it involve a substantial modification of the relationship of social and political force, opening up a prospect toward a democratic socialism?

"In function of one or the other of these analyses, what judgment is to be made about governmental policy?

"What is the meaning of the Communist ministers' participation?

"What achievable objectives can the party propose to the workers?

"What alliances should it form?

"And on what platform?

"Have the orientations taken and the themes developed by the party in recent years had an influence on its election losses or not? Did the leadership gauge correctly the profound mutations in society, the amplitude of the aspiration to change and of the unitary current?

"On the basis of what concept of the relationship of classes and of the social movement did it make the strengthening of the party the prior condition for change?

"What analysis of the PS and of its social base did it carry out to reach the conclusion that its orientation could only be toward the right?

"What today is the evolution of the situation and of the relationship of forces in West Europe? What position should the party adopt on Eurocommunism and on union of the left and of the democratic forces on the European scale?

"What evaluation, based on total independence of judgment, should the PCF make of the present situation of the socialist countries, notably in Poland, on the various aspects of the USSR's foreign policy, on Afghanistan?

"What should its behavior be in the face of the persistent attacks on democracy in the USSR and in other socialist countries? Should the judgment of 'overall positive balance' be confirmed?

"What does a foreign policy independent of the blocs and of the great powers--as regards, for example, medium-range missiles in Europe, detente and disarmament--mean concretely for France?"

"Rencontres" Founders Statement

Paris RENCONTRES COMMUNISTES HEBDO in French 17 Nov 81 p 1

[Article: "The Essential--A Declaration by the Rencontres Communistes Founding Collective"]

[Text] With the opening of the discussion-platform columns in L'HUMANITE, the debate that the Communists initiated just after the presidential election becomes officially public. The appearance, a few days earlier, of an article by G. Plissonier and a communique from the committee in charge of the discussion platform has shown that the leadership is forced to take account, 3 months away from the Congress, of the emergence of a quarrelsome debate within the party. The Central Committee's proposed resolution is running up against a lot of criticism; it is not succeeding in rallying the party on the central question of the causes and the consequences of its serious election setback. The attempt to put an end by administrative measures to the political crisis shaking it is encountering strong resistance. All this is quite evident to everyone. It is unprecedented. It is urgent to create the conditions for this situation to lead toward reestablishment of the party's cohesion and unity.

In this regard, acceptance of the diversity of the Communists and scrupulous respect for the democratic rules in the preparation for the congress are essential conditions. But instead of this, the innumerable Communists who consider "the CC's document as an attempt by the leadership to dodge examination of its activity in

the recent period and to throw onto the previous leaderships the responsibility for the 1981 election setback"¹ are accused of "making a profession of distorting the positions of the PCF."¹

Its recourse to such an approach proves that the leadership is obstinately continuing, despite its denials, to make the policy it has carried out in recent years an inviolable sanctuary.

This attitude blocks the situation and makes concrete definition of a constructive policy impossible.

The leadership asserts that "the debate for the Congress will concentrate above all on our strategy, on the deepening of it,"¹ but its behavior and the proposed resolution tend to make serious strategic discussion impossible. How, indeed, is the party's strategy to be worked out if examination of its implementation since the 23rd Congress is totally occulted, if the experience and the memory of the Communists and of all our people are snubbed if unflinching analysis of actual political practice is excluded from the search for the causes of the outcome?

Much could be said, of course, about what is delicately called "the retardation suffered in 1956." The period of the common program would call for rigorous analysis. But there is a great abyss between these matters and any assertion that the entire problem goes back a quarter of a century, that the common program was "typically an agreement to issue a summons that does not really correspond to anything in the mass movement,"¹ and that it is such practice of union that "weakens the positions of the working class and of the Communist Party."¹ How, on that basis, can the nature of the change that has just occurred in France be defined correctly? Do the defeat of Giscard d'Estaing, the victory of the Socialist Party, and the presence of Communist ministers in the government constitute so many "weakenings of the positions of the working class," or on the contrary, do they create conditions more favorable for the advance toward its hegemony in society? Is the change that has occurred positive or negative in the eyes of the PCF? Has it occurred in spite of or because of the experience of the common program? And did it necessarily have to be accompanied by the loss of the Communist electorate and half of the Communist deputies?

There is an insurmountable contradiction in the position defended by the leadership. One may not in the same breath proclaim that the previous analyses (the strengthening of the party's influence considered as a prior condition for any change; rightward turn by the PS; continuation, even aggravation, of Giscardian policy in the event of a PS victory; absence of any possibility of change without a total change, etc) were well-founded and justify the Communists' participation in the government led by the PS and the positive evaluation of the balance-sheet of the new government's first months.

To refuse to carry out a critical reexamination is to condemn oneself to a generalized discourse, unrelated to any specific time, to ambiguous attitudes that aggravate the party's loss of credibility and impede the development of the popular movement. That is why the draft resolution does not propose any analysis of the

1. Gaston Plissonnier, L'HUMANITE, 4 November 1981

economic, social, political, ideological situation of our country since 10 May; of the chances for going ahead toward revolutionary transformations with a Socialist Party in the majority; of the policy that should be implemented by a government in which we are participating; of the alliances and compromises that should be made with the various social classes and political forces, so as to go as far as possible along the way to democratic and social reforms.

One has to take a clear look at the recent past. It is essential for examination of the policy followed since 1977 to be at the heart of the discussion. This is the necessary condition for responding to the questions of the present and of the future, in order for the 24th Congress to enable the PCF to commit itself fully to action for the success of the change and put it on the path toward revival of its influence.

Pressure on Cells

Paris RENCONTRES COMMUNISTES HEBDO in French 28 Nov 81 p 7

[Article by Anne Brunswic: "Escalation to Illegality"]

[Text] The 13 cells that have refused to apply the sanctions against the founding members of the Rencontres Communistes collective are being subjected to various pressures from the leaderships to get them to reverse their decision. Will they be sanctioned in turn? This is the question that has to be asked after certain recent events.

The Halles (1st arrondissement) section committee, carrying out a federation directive, has informed the Pitard cell of the Palais de Justice of Paris that it risks being excluded from participation in the section conference if it maintains its attitude concerning two of its members, comrades E. Kenig and R. Rappaport. (It will be recalled that the cell refused to consider that they had put themselves outside the party.) On 16 November last, the cell adopted a motion expressing its strong feelings about that notice, its refusal to bend in the face of threats that are against the by-laws, and its desire to participate normally in the section conference and the preparation for the congress.

The other cell of the Palais de Justice (the Hajje cell) also passed a resolution stating that the development and guaranteeing of democratic discussion in the party depends particularly on respect for the by-laws and considering that the CC declaration "noting that the comrades have put themselves outside the party" is against the by-laws. It is not without significance that the two cells of lawyers are opposing the violation of the party's by-laws. Similar threats (not being permitted to participate in the section conferences and the preparation for the congress) have been made to other cells, particularly that of the University of Paris I (to which F. Hincker belongs) and the Paris Opera cell (of which G. Morain is a member).

The M. Audin cell of the University of Nanterre is experiencing a different type of pressure. In effect, that cell's treasurer has been refused, by the section secretary, the dues stamps so long as J. Rony takes part in the meetings. Is it hoped in this way to get the comrades to reverse their position, or is it desired by this means to jeopardize the cell's participation in the section conference? In any

case, the cell, informed of these facts and in possession of a letter from the federation asking the secretary to discuss the problems with the federation officials, has decided to invite those officials to the next cell meeting for the purpose of debating all of the questions broadly and openly.

By such methods, one may fear that the leadership is getting ready for entire cells to "put themselves outside the party."

In this regard, Article 15 of the by-laws adopted at the last congress should be recalled: "As regards the organizations, the sanctions can be the following: internal Party censure, public censure, removal of the sanctioned leadership with replacement by an acting leadership. In case of necessity, dissolution of a cell may be carried out.... Expulsion and dissolution require ratification by the Central Committee, which may make them public."

The by-laws therefore do not provide, by way of sanctions, either for the withholding of stamps or for exclusion from preparation for the congress. These violations of the party's legality are certainly not of such a nature as to resolve the political question expressed by the existence of RCH; nor are they capable of restoring confidence in the present leadership and the unity of the party.

It may be regretted that the leadership's creativity and capacity for innovation are limited to internal party sanctions. The present political situation should rather give it an opportunity to act in a more constructive manner.

Criticism of Deputies, Newspaper

Paris RENCONTRES COMMUNISTES HEBDO in French 23 Oct 81 p 5

[Article by Yvonne Quiles: "Responsible--Governing Means Getting One's Feet Wet"]

[Text] If there is a concept that the Communist Party would be well-advised to apply in all its force today, it is that of "ideological warfare." Invented at the time of the 23rd Congress for the needs of the situation--that is, for shooting from the battlements at anything that moved, including anything in its own ranks--it has curiously lost some of its bold vitality. Yet it is now, at a time when the CNPF [National Council of French Employers], the members of Parliament, the parties and press of the right are breaking loose, sharpening their claws, that the moment is particularly well-chosen for breaking out the weapons on the battlefield of ideas and politics. The PCF used to wage pitiless warfare at a time when it was alone in hunting out enemies everywhere, especially among its allies who were "veering to the right" and among those of its militants who were "veering toward treason," today it too often gives an equally strong impression of fight with its foils buttoned.

Waging "ideological warfare" against real enemies, within the framework of governmental solidarity, presupposes at least two conditions: resolute support, even when it should be critical, of the experiment in progress; and the updating, without any ambiguity, of its own policy. This is the whole difficulty of passing from protest to proposals in the company of partners whom it continues, implicitly in the proposed resolution for the 24th Congress, to consider as potential adversaries. This is unavoidable insofar as it rejects the least challenging of the sectarian and antiunitary policy practiced from 1977 to 1981.

The PCF waxes indignant against the employers, of course, and formally supports most of the governmental measures, but it is acting more like a fussy critic awarding good and bad points than like a decisive protagonist of history.

The government's policy is founded on basic principles to which the Communist Party has given its agreement--and both in foreign policy (for example, condemnation of the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan and the past or future installation of missiles in Europe and in economic and social policy.

Is it assuming all its responsibilities?

Reading L'HUMANITE every day, one has a right to doubt it. Its contortions over the Reagan-Brezhnev polemic are only too transparent.¹ As for the political struggle against the employers, one would like it to be both sharper and clearer. For example, is it in agreement with the Mauroy government's fundamental orientation consisting, for the needs of recovery, in not overburdening the enterprises, especially the small and medium-size ones, with excessively heavy charges?

Either the PCF is in agreement with this concept, which will have a profound effect on the future, and should say so, explain it and fight for its application, or it is not, in which case it should also say so. One may not act as if this reality did not exist and restrict oneself, in one's statements, to the traditional attack against all the employers, big and small, and to the no less traditional defense of workers' demands. Governing means getting one's feet wet; it is the opposite of fence-sitting. When, on the subject of employer-government relations, Mauroy went on the counterattack, drew up a balance-sheet of the facilities and credits made available to the business chiefs since 10 May, detailed the choices for 1982, and at the same time reiterated his determination not to go back on the new policy chosen by the French, L'HUMANITE² gave him, under an ultraneutral headline, only an entirely insipid short article, carefully refraining from taking a side and arguing in one direction or the other. One could cite an infinite number of this kind of example of indecisiveness.

Thus, with regard to the recent recourse to ordinances, one sought in vain, in the headline of the following day's L'HUMANITE²--"The Communist Deputies: Adopting the Social Reforms Approved by the Country"--any clear and distinct statement of position. Agreed? Not agreed? In the laconic text, one learns that the Communist Parliamentary group said more or less yes, etc, on condition that, etc, and it is quite regrettable in any case, etc. A bit short as an argument against the right, which is breaking out, in this regard, under cover of democracy. "Ideological warfare" presupposes, in my judgment, presupposes that one gets a bit more active against the reaction.

After the shock of May, the reaction revived, organized, played politics. Something other than a supercilious neutrality is needed in order to fight it effectively. When it attacks the entire government of the left from all angles, it is rather correct to break into the eternal refrain of anicomunism. The situation has changed since 10 May, hasn't it? So have the stakes.

1. On this subject, see the article by J.J. Rosat.

2. L'HUMANITE of 20 November 1981.

Finally, if one wants to rally all the forces of the social movement to go along with the change, then one must not reduce "the indispensable new forms of union" to the presence of four Communist ministers in the government. On this count, an imminent "retardation" guaranteed in advance is being prepared for. By watching to protect oneself on the right, on the left, in front, in the rear, one runs the risk of being doomed to paralysis.

And "ideological warfare" will rage without any decisive action.

Repressive Measures Against Dissidents

Paris RENCONTRES COMMUNISTES HEBDO in French 23 Oct 81 p 5

[Article by Serge Briand: "Toward the Congress--A Dangerous Escalation in Which Incoherence Vies with the Ridiculous"]

[Text] The Communists were awaiting the proposed resolution for the 24th Congress, hopefully in many cases.

To a certain disappointment at the repelling of the questions that everyone is asking is added an abrupt and precipitous escalation in violation of the rules by the leadership. It is no longer just a matter of slight irregularities.

While hundreds of Communists sign a petition demanding that the Congress be presented with all of the questions relating to the development of the democratic life of the party, the leadership has in recent days taken some new steps, just at the time that it was beginning the preparation for the 24th Congress--which is not without significance.

Three significant examples, among many others, reveal methods that are different but that share a relentless urge to demolish.

In Saint-Cloud, in the face of the broadly expressed refusal by the Section Committee to disavow the first secretary (Serge Briand, a member of the RC founding collective), the federation secretariat called the CS [Section Committee] to Federation headquarters, "forgetting" to invite three of its members. Ten members of the CS out of 18 were received by the security service on the sidewalk outside Federation headquarters. They asked to participate in the meeting, /with the first secretary/. Refused. They decided to leave. During this time, a minority of members of the CS (eight, including the federation secretary for propaganda, who is a staff member and a member of the Section even though he does not reside there), "enlightened" by two other federation secretaries, one of whom is a member of the CC, "elected" a new first secretary (the federation secretary for propaganda).

The CS majority could only address itself to the Federation Committee and to the CC to ask them to disavow these methods.

But who, then, guarantees the legality of the party? And who indulges in factional activities?

In Paris, the municipal Communist Group "decided" that Francoise Durand, Michel Ferignac, Henri Fiszbin and Jean-Jacques Rosat no longer belong to the Group and asked them to turn in their commissions. Their reply is given below.

Is this the way it is desired to begin the revival of the party in the capital? In Sevres, the limit of incoherence was reached. Despite the majority support of the municipal Communist group for Roger Fajnzylberg, the Section Committee "decided" by 13 votes (including several "coopted" comrades) to 10 that Roger Fajnzylberg is no longer a member of the CS or of the party. And the Section informed the town's population of this by means of leaflets (again with a view to the revival of the party?). But R. Fajnzylberg was not asked to turn in his commission, contrary to what happened in Paris: the Section "reaffirms its desire to see the Municipal Council, as it is composed, carry out its mandate." Thus we see Sevres made the first Communist-led municipality with a "noncommunist" mayor.

This operation of internal repression has repercussions beyond the party's organizations: a comrade of the RC collective has already seen the suppression of the conferences on Ireland in which he was supposed to participate in three Communist-led municipalities.

The three examples cited are characteristic of the contradiction between the political objectives proclaimed (going toward revival of the party) and the destructive means employed for stifling the critics. Paris had already had experience of these methods. The outcome is known. Is it desired to further widen the field of experience?

Whose interest is it in to create such a climate among Communists? Why this escalation of repression and violation of the party's rules? Does this signify a heightened desire on the part of the leadership to "master" the preparatory debate for the Congress at all costs?

One may fear so, on the basis of the proposed resolution itself.

Nothing is more urgent than to debate freely and to manifest clearly the desire for reestablishment of the democratic legality of the party.

Now, only the congress can judge.

The Letter from the Four Communist Councillors

"To the office of the Communist Group in the Paris Council:

"It was in L'HUMANITE that we learned of the statement by the Communist Group in the Paris Council to the effect that we no longer belong to that Group.

"Since the de-facto expulsion from the party's ranks declared against us, on which this decision is based, does not have any legal foundation in the by-laws, we have in this matter appealed to the Congress for it to reestablish the party's legality. You will understand that under these conditions, we do not accept the decision taken by the Group.

"No one will be able to prevent us from continuing to act as Communist Councillors of Paris, which we are, or from remaining faithful to the commitments and to the program on which the Communist candidates were elected in 1977.

"Consequently, we have informed the mayor of Paris of our choice: we are enrolled in the Communist Group and we remain in it.

"In accordance with our practices, the Communist Councillors of Paris are staff members appointed by the party; their compensation is paid entirely and directly by the City's financial services to the treasury of the Paris federation of the PCF. We understand that nothing is to be changed in this arrangement."

Francoise Durand, Michel Ferignac, Henri Fiszbin, Jean-Jacques Rosat

Cell, District Rules on Debate

Paris RENCONTRES COMMUNISTES HEBDO in French 28 Nov 81 p 5

[Article by Louis Regulier: "Toward the Congress--Changing Habits--How to Get Away from the Established Practices"]

[Text] In the preparatory discussion for the 24th Congress, there is indisputably a great controversial debate in progress in the cells. This is something new, marking the Communists' desire to "challenge themselves" in order to discover the deep-seated reasons for the party's political setback and for the profound crisis it is going through, and to bring out the political orientations that can unite the Communists in their action for the success of the new policy desired by the workers of our country.

The problem posed to the Communists today is to find the way by which this controversial debate can be expressed in the sessions of the 24th Congress, so that the delegates can make the choices and take the decisions that correspond to the Communists' majority desire.

It is obvious that the pattern we recall for the preparation for the preceding congresses is of such a nature as to discourage many Communists who have stayed in the party with the hope that the democratic debate that occurs in the cells will go all the way up to the congress.

Therefore it is necessary for this hope to become a beginning of reality, for the Communists to make known their desire that their opinion be taken into account. There is only one way for this to be possible: to change habits.

It is indispensable to get away from the established practices, perpetuated, rooted in the party's life and leading to gradual elimination of all opinions that are considered deficient or are different from those that the Central Committee fixes as the framework for discussion within the party.

First of all, it is very harmful for the section delegate (a member of the section committee, the federation committee or the Central Committee), charged to "track" the cell, be mandated to defend at any cost the document submitted for discussion.

The mission of the section delegate should rather be to give the cell the benefit of the knowledge he has acquired, by his responsibility to spark debate, to help each Communist of the cell to express his opinion on everything that concerns him and the ideas he may have on the various questions.

Next, it seems to me, it is necessary for the discussion to make it possible above all for the Communists to make known their opinions on the fundamental political

problems connected with analysis of the party's activity since the last congress, with critical examination of the leaderships and with the orientations to be taken in the long, medium and short terms. In order for the debate to be able to develop in this spirit, it is again necessary to change the existing practices that lock thinking into the framework of the analyses that are presented in the preparatory document and which moreover parcel it up by cutting the discussion into chapters, on the pretext that it would not be possible to discuss the whole at once. (It must be said that the broad scope of the 24th Congress document goes in that direction.)

This way of doing things, as experience demonstrates, leads little by little to turning one away from discussion of the great fundamental problems and orienting it toward approval of the text as a matter of confidence in the leadership. This bit-by-bit critical discussion of the document results in votes in which the cell's Communists essentially express their differences on the amendments proposed, chapter by chapter (and therefore it is not out of the question to see certain amendments that contradict one another), and concludes with the overall favorable vote on the document, very often unanimous, with the formula, and I quote: "Keeping it in mind that all the amendments will be transmitted to the section conference: who is for the proposed document, who is against, who abstains?"

In reality--and every Communist feels it this way--it is no longer the proposed document that is being voted on; rather, one is voting for or against the leadership. Since I have done this for 20 years, as a member of the federation committee, I have had an opinion for some years.

It seems to me that the Communists should, in their own party, get away from the habits of delegation of power--rooted in the bitter evolution of the class struggle--as a means of expression, in order for the voice of the workers to be heard at all levels in capitalist society. But today, with the democracy that we are defining as the end and the means of our policy, it is no longer possible to go forward in that direction if the democratic life of the party is not in the vanguard toward this objective.

The final idea and practice to be implemented in the cell is that it provide itself with the means for making known and continuing on, at the section-conference level, with the rich discussion that has taken place in the cell.

The way in which the cell delegates to the section conference are to be elected is therefore the key question for the continuation of the discussion. If the delegation is composed solely of comrades whose vote corresponds to that of the majority, while they are supposed to express and defend the opinion of the entire cell, there is a blockage of contradictory discussion. The delegation-of-power practice is what is established. The cell's delegation should be an expression of its diversity and should include comrades representative of the militant activity and of the plurality of ideas of the members. For this purpose, it is necessary to place confidence in the Communists of the cell to make the choices best-suited to continuation of the discussion in the section conference.

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